

*From Stethoscopes to Sneakers***From the Operating Room to the Finish Line: Running for Life and Raising Hope**

**Dr. Anurag Gupta**  
Sr. Consultant Neurosurgeon  
Fortis Hospital, Vasant Kunj  
New Delhi

The neurosurgeons are often the first medical contact for patients with severe brain injuries or those declared brain-dead. Having trained in the South but practised largely in the North, Dr. Anurag has observed first-hand the striking differences in family attitudes toward organ donation across regions. He recalls that a decade ago, initiating a conversation about organ donation often invited anger and suspicion - doctors were even labelled “murderers” or “organ stealers.” Thankfully, attitudes have evolved, and families today are at least open to discussing organ donation. Yet, the rate of donation in North India remains alarmingly low with many families declining consent, often citing religious reasons. He notes that this number is likely even higher in government hospitals due to lack of awareness which he feels “almost criminal.”

Outside the operating room, Dr. Gupta has had a personal journey of transformation. Always the “khate-peete ghar ka bachcha,” as he humorously describes himself, he struggled with his weight throughout school and medical college. By the time he completed his training, he weighed nearly 100 kg. Determined to change, he began his fitness journey, lost weight,

**Corresponding Author:** Dr. Sunil Shroff,  
MOHAN Foundation, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India  
**Email:** shroff@mohanfoundation.org

and regained his health. However, after moving to Delhi, work pressures crept in, and old habits returned.

In 2017, he took up running - what began as a small step soon became a lifelong pursuit. Over the past eight years, he has gone from the couch to completing multiple half-marathons, full marathons, four Ironman 70.3 events, and, this year, a full Ironman (3.8 km swimming + 180 km cycling + 42 km running). He says this journey has not only improved his physical fitness but also brought mental calm and balance - traits not usually associated with neurosurgeons, who, he jokes, “are more famous for being the goondas of the hospital.”

When approached to run and raise funds for MOHAN Foundation's initiative, “Anudaan- Making Transplants Affordable”, he knew instantly it was a perfect fit - an opportunity to combine two of his greatest passions: organ transplantation and fitness. “From saving lives in the operating room to running for those who can give life - the journey is driven by the same heartbeat of purpose,” says Dr. Gupta.

Starting with a modest target of ₹1 lakh, he ended up raising over ₹4.5 lakh in just two months. The overwhelming response made him the third-highest individual fundraiser. Reflecting on the experience, he shares, “Asking for money is never easy - asking for someone else is even harder. But it's one of the most humbling and grounding experiences anyone can have.” He hopes it has helped more people understand the importance of organ donation - and that, one day, families will walk up and say, “We want to donate,” instead of the medical fraternity having to ask.

He smiles and adds, “As a neurosurgeon, I fight for life in the operating room; as a runner, I celebrate it on the track. Both journeys remind me that the human spirit knows no limits.”

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