

Rupal Shah

Q & A



Rupal Shah is a GP in Inner City London and works as an Associate Dean for NHS England. As well as her many academic publications, she is a co-author of *Our Mothers Ourselves*, a memoir of mothering.

What is your most treasured possession?

Not a possession, but I'd have to say my family – my husband Alistair, daughters Anya and Ava, parents and in-laws. Nothing would be possible without them.

What are you currently reading?

A Hundred Years of Solitude. I have started it a few times before and given up but very glad to have persevered this time.

Do you have a favourite album?

Blue by Joni Mitchell.

What's your favourite thing about being a GP?

When a patient meets my eye towards the end of a consultation and there is a natural pause and shift; and a feeling of mutual understanding that means we don't need any more words. They might leave the room feeling less burdened and I am left with a feeling of warmth, validation and gratitude that I do the job I do and have the privilege of glimpsing into someone else's inner world.

What scholar or school of thought has had the greatest influence on your own thinking and research?

Narrative medicine. The idea that human beings make meaning through storytelling. It has very much influenced my medical practice though unfortunately, stories are hard to capture in triage forms.

What was your main goal when writing *Fighting for the Soul of General Practice*? What are your hopes for the book?

I started writing because I wanted to capture some of the more meaningful encounters I have had as a GP, those that made me think differently, question myself and my motivations. I would like it to start conversations within our profession about how these kinds of encounters constitute the soul of our work and how this dimension of the consultation can be integrated with the biomedical. I would love educators, politicians and people who influence health policy to take notice.

How can we save the soul of general practice?

By protecting relationships, accepting nuance and promoting connection and meaning.

How do you manage being an academic and a general practitioner?

I really enjoy writing and it's how I make sense of the world, as some people do through art or music. I have felt so passionate about the need to articulate and rail against what I have seen happening to general practice, that it was almost a compulsion to write about it.

What do you do to relax?

Go to the cinema, for a walk or watch something like *Brooklyn 99* or *Modern Family* with my teenage daughters. We have recently all got into *Twin Peaks*, a reminder of school days for me and for Alistair and so interesting that it still has the same effect on our girls as it did for us!

What's the craziest thing or the most beautiful thing you've experienced as a practicing medical professional?

Last week, a 17-year-old came to see me. I had been reading reports from the hospital about her metastatic cancer, which had relapsed three times. She asked me if she could be accepted for work experience at the practice because she wants to be an oncology nurse when she leaves school.

Name something you love about Intellect

The craftsmanship, responsiveness and attention to detail.

What are you working on?

A compilation of stories with four of the women who wrote *Our Mothers Ourselves* – called *Encounters* about brief encounters that changed something for us; and a textbook on hermeneutics.