Again, developing such a joint venture pattern of studies would help you in the long run, as you would need it in medical school.

THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

English medium students and their parents are, by tradition, worried about the difference in language. However, actually this is a very small problem that can be and has to be overcome. First, the HSC books are all written in Bangla and the admission test questions are asked right from these books. Hence, there is no alternative to knowing what these books say. Fortunately, these books write the technical terms in English alongside the Bangla synonyms, so if you are comfortable with general Bangla (haven't you had Bangla at O-Level?), you should not have any problem in reading these books. If you are not, you will have to collect the books for students who study HSC in English. One such classmate told me that they had a few books written in English by their teachers, and had to make up the rest from lecture sheets provided by teachers and from their own translations of the Bangla books. You can collect the books and lecture sheets from English-HSC students or from the English sections of medical admission coaching centres. However, this would be painstaking and time-consuming, so go for it only if you feel you are too weak in Bangla. Furthermore, this will not solve the problem fully, because the English in these books / lecture sheets is quite different from the British English in your A-Level books. Translations cannot fully preserve the theme represented in the original writing. In addition, most of the teachers and students at medical school have a Bangla medium background, so lectures are mostly delivered in Bangla (although the books, lecture sheets and examinations are in English). This means that you would need to develop your Bangla listening and speaking skills, and you would rarely have a patient who would tell you their complaints in English or would prefer to consult a doctor who does not understand or speak Bangla properly. For the admission test, you can choose between English and Bangla as the language of the question paper. In fact, the paper is first set out in Bangla and is then translated to English. I had chosen the Bangla question, because both the examiner and I would understand it equally, while English would differ between the translator and me. However, the difference is perhaps not too bad, as I was the only English medium student who chose the Bangla question paper, but not the only one who got admitted.

The popular saying asks you to look before you leap, but there are things you need to do before you can afford to even "look" at medical schools. Before you can reach out for the star or the moon, you need to stand on high ground. The minimum requirements are C's, but to start from a competitive position, you should have A's in Biology, Physics and Chemistry at A-Level, in addition to 6 A's at O-Level including these three subjects.

COACHING CENTRES

To learn the art of memorizing and to know which things to memorize, it is almost obligatory for A-Level graduates to go to a medical admission coaching centre. However, coaching centres do not actually teach they simply take you through a revision schedule and give practice tests. You should put yourself in the driving seat and take what they provide as a guideline only. You should identify the gap between your A-Level understanding and their HSC expectations and take their help in overcoming those drawbacks.

Several coaching centres have now opened separate sections for English medium students. I do not have a very clear idea about it, but what I understand is that they try to deliver lectures, lecture sheets and tests in English. However, as I said earlier, language is too small a problem and the gap between the A-Level and HSC way of studying remains on you to be bridged. In addition, you cannot find your HSC guru in the English section of the centre. However, the Banglish environment of the English section is closer to that of medical school than the Bangla environment of the standard sections, and you can find other English medium people whose background and attitude are similar to yours, making your stay at the centre more enjoyable and comfortable. Therefore, the choice of section is yours. However, I have something to say about the choice of centre. The number of coaching centres has increased tremendously over the past couple of years. Each centre, naturally, has its pros and cons. Equally naturally, the management of the centre and their student agents (beware!) who pose as "senior brothers offering advice" would speak to you only about discounts, freebies, AC rooms and prizes.

They would show you their prospectuses claiming that 90% of last year's admissions were from their centre (an utter lie by any centre). Be intelligent enough to ignore their baits and find out whether they offer what YOU need. Also, do not rely on the fame of a centre. Any place of learning is little more than the collective goodness of its teachers, so when you evaluate a centre, look at its teachers, not its name or its past batch of students.

Ensure that the centre has a fixed group of (not more than five) teachers who have experience in medical admission coaching. It sounds nice when centres offer "the help of more than a hundred medical students", but it hurts to discover the truth of the saying "too many cooks spoil the broth". Remember that the "centre" cannot help you you need a living human, or a few of them, who know about the system, about you, and would have a responsibility towards you. Remember that, for any purpose, we seek the help of a few experts and not of many amateurs.