



AASAN Newsletter April 2010



From Left to Right: Girish Hiremath, Ketan R. Bulsara, Shekar Kurpad, Praveen Mummaneni, Ashwini Sharan

New Officers

During the last CNS meeting held in October, 2009 in New Orleans, AASAN elected its new leadership. Dr. Ashwini Sharan was named the new president of the organization, taking over from Dr. Jogi Pattisapu. Dr. Sharan is Associate Professor of Neurosurgery at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, PA. He is an active member of the Executive Committee of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons. His interests include complex spine surgery, epilepsy surgery, and deep brain stimulation surgery. Dr. Sharan's vision for AASAN is to continue to work in collaboration with neurosurgeons from India, and promote a mutually beneficial learning atmosphere. Dr. Shekar Kurpad took over from Dr. Shripathi Holla as the new secretary of AASAN. Dr. Kurpad is Associate Professor of Neurosurgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin. Dr. Kurpad, a previous recipient of the prestigious Van Wagenen Fellowship, is actively involved in basic and clinical spinal cord injury research and runs a research program in the imaging of and molecular treatments for, spinal cord injury. His clinical interests include complex spine surgery and skull base surgery. Dr. Praveen Mummaneni, Associate Professor in Neurosurgery at University of California, San Francisco, is the new treasurer of AASAN, taking over from Dr. Chander Kohli. Dr. Mummaneni is on the Editorial Board of Journal of Neurosurgery, Spine, and has published extensively in the areas of minimally invasive spine surgery as well as spinal deformity surgery. He is also an Active Member of the Executive Committee of the AANS/CNS Section of Spine and Peripheral Nerves. Two new positions,

those of members-at-large, were created at the previous AASAN meeting. Drs. Ketan R. Bulsara and Girish Hiremath were chosen for these two posts. Dr. Bulsara is dual fellowship trained in skull base/cerebrovascular microsurgery and endovascular neurosurgery. He serves as an Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery at Yale University School of Medicine and directs the skull base microsurgery and endovascular neurosurgery programs. Dr. Hiremath is finishing up his fellowship in Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery at William Beaumont Hospital in Michigan, and will be joining Riverside Hospital in Columbus, Ohio as staff neurosurgeon.

Jaipur Meeting

This year, the 59th annual Neurological Society of India (NSI) conference (NEUROCON) will be held between December 16 and 19, 2010 in Jaipur, India, and a 3-D skull base course will precede the conference on December 15, 2010. The 2010 NSI conference is a truly historic event, as the conference will be jointly hosted with the Congress of Neurological Surgeons. As a result, AASAN has assumed the role of facilitating the invitation and attendance of US-based neurosurgeons to this conference. At the time of this newsletter, the AASAN and the NSI plan to invite two dozen or so US-based neurosurgical faculty to this meeting. In addition, we expect over 20 neurosurgical residents and fellows to present their work. Residents and fellows will be chosen to attend based on the merits of the abstracts submitted. In addition, the NSI has, for the first time, included US-based neurosurgical residents' and fellows' abstracts to be included in the various award paper categories. The 3-D skull base course will be moderated by Dr. Saleem Abdulrauf, and be comprised of a distinguished faculty panel.

Obviously, the organization and funding of such a unique event is not an easy task. AASAN is working with its members in order to make this event a success. It is with this intention that we are asking all AASAN membership to make generous donations in order to help sponsor American faculty and resident/fellow participation at this unique conference. Donations should be sent to the attention of the AASAN treasurer, Dr. Praveen Mummaneni (vmum@aol.com). Further preliminary information is available at:

<http://www.neurocon2010.com/>

Abstract submission timelines, as well as registration and housing information will be forthcoming. For further information, you may also contact Professor H. Bagariya or Professor Ashok Panagariya (org_secretary@neurocon2010.com) who are the organizing secretary and chairman, respectively, for the conference and are based in Jaipur.

Personal Perspective

We are beginning a new series in the newsletter on senior neurosurgeons of Indian origin. The goal of such a piece is to obtain a more personal view of their experiences with neurosurgery in addition to their visions for the future of collaboration between US-based Indian neurosurgeons and neurosurgeons from India. For this first piece, we chose Dr. Raj Narayan, currently chairman of the department of neurosurgery at the North Shore Long Island Jewish Medical Center and Director of the Harvey Cushing Institutes for Neuroscience in New York. Dr. Narayan was a natural first choice for us, having been very intimately involved with AASAN, since its inception.



Dr. Raj Narayan

Dr. Narayan is well known to all of us as having made tremendous strides in the advancement of neurotrauma care, authoring more than 100 peer-reviewed articles on the subject, in addition to one of the most referenced books on the topic, "Neurotrauma." Although his family originates from Bangalore, India, Raj was born in Hyderabad, and as his father was an officer in the Indian army, the family moved often, resulting in Raj being educated

in many different parts of India. He knew early in his life that he wanted to pursue neurosurgery. He cites some of his original motivations for the field after reading the book, *Death Be Not Proud*, John Gunther's true story of his son's battle with Glioblastoma.

He received his medical education at the Christian Medical College (CMC) in Vellore, India. Dr. Narayan has fond memories of CMC Vellore: for one, this is where he met, and later married Tina, his wife. It was in CMC that India's pioneering neurosurgeon, Dr. Jacob Chandy established the first neurosurgical unit. Dr. Narayan tells us that CMC, founded by the American missionary physician Ida Scudder, remains a major referral center for the country, despite the increase of for-profit hospitals throughout the country, a testament to the high quality of ethical care delivered to patients there.

Having completed his internship and a year of neurosurgery at CMC Vellore, Dr. Narayan left for the US, and began to research head injury at the Medical College of Virginia at Richmond under the direction of Dr. Don Becker. Impressed with his work, Dr. Becker offered Dr. Narayan a residency position in neurosurgery. At the completion of his training in Richmond, Dr. Narayan moved onto the NIH, where he worked with Dr. Edward Oldfield in the area of Neuro-Oncology. He was later recruited by Dr. Robert Grossman at Baylor, where Dr. Narayan headed the Department of Neurosurgery at Ben Taub Hospital. Over a ten-year period at Baylor, Raj helped establish a major NIH-funded research program in traumatic brain injury.

Since his years at Baylor, Dr. Narayan has since chaired three Departments of Neurosurgery— Temple University in Philadelphia, the University of Cincinnati, and most recently, at North Shore LIJ. He tells us that his passion is in developing Departments of Neurosurgery, training residents, and setting up systems of healthcare delivery.

As we returned to the topic of neurosurgical collaboration between neurosurgeons here in the US and in India, and AASAN's role, Dr. Narayan firmly believes that we are off to a good start, with the recent CNS meeting being the largest ever meeting of neurosurgeons from India and US based neurosurgeons of Indian origin. He states that there is a great need to continue to meet and spend time

with each other, as there is a great deal that American neurosurgeons can learn from neurosurgical practice in India, which he feels, is truly an "unevenly developed country."

Dr. Narayan feels that the challenge for India in the near future is to establish quality control across a broad set of medical institutions. He feels that young Indian neurosurgeons should be able to learn from US departments of neurosurgery, especially in regard to how systems should be set up in order to achieve this goal of standardization. Nowhere is this more important, than in the setting up of a systematic neurotrauma management system, in India, which is, in Dr. Narayan's opinion, still in a very nascent stage. To be sure, some organizations such as the newly-formed Indian Head Injury Foundation are making initial attempts to improve healthcare delivery systems in collaboration with the US-based Brain Trauma Foundation. "One can make a tremendous impact on survival by improving the system," he says. Dr. Narayan is optimistic that India will eventually succeed in this endeavour, as there is a visible sea-change in the attitude of the citizens there. "India is now filled with a much greater sense of self-esteem, pride, and confidence than had existed even just a few years ago" says Narayan. "The transformation is wonderful to see".

As we concluded, Dr. Narayan's advice to young neurosurgeons who are beginning their careers is to first of all know what one wants in life, and then to decide whether one is willing to pay the price to get there. This equation is obviously different for each individual, but in reaching whatever goal one sets, he advises us to maintain the highest ethical standards.

Next Meeting (AANS)

The next meeting will be held during the AANS meeting in Philadelphia on Monday, May 3, 2010 from 5:30 to 7:00 pm at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown in 'Franklin 10.' On the agenda will be the logistics of the organization of the conference in Jaipur in December, among other issues. We sincerely hope that you would be able to attend this important meeting.