

# 12TH ANNUAL MEETING OF PAKISTAN SOCIETY OF NEUROLOGY

**Arsalan Ahmad**

The 12th annual meeting of Pakistan Society of Neurology (PSN) took place at Shifa International Hospital, Islamabad, on April 22-23, 2006. It was widely attended, with 40 of the approximately 70 neurologists from Pakistan's nine major cities, as well senior neurologists from India and United Arab Emirates participating. The PSN president Prof. Muhammad Tariq (Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences) and organizing committee chairman Dr. Arsalan Ahmad (Shifa International Hospital) welcomed participants and sponsors. The chief guest of the inaugural session was Prof. Anees Ahmed (Vice-Chancellor, Riphah International Islamic University). He stressed the need to design an integrated educational system with the aim of producing medical personnel with a sound appreciation of the humanitarian dimension. He also emphasized that doctors and health professionals must be motivated to pursue new areas for research, analysis and treatment of diseases with local relevance.

The meeting was spread over two days and comprised 5 scientific sessions that collectively included 41 platform presentations including 10 invited lectures and 20 poster presentations. Of the invited speakers, Prof. Jagjit S. Chopra (India) spoke about his experience on neurocysticercosis; Prof. M.M. Mehndiratta (India) spoke about stroke treatment as practiced in different regions of India, including thrombolysis and results; Dr. Muhammad Saddah (United Arab Emirates) gave an in-depth review of brain death; Dr. Saad Shafqat (Aga Khan University) presented an overview of women with epilepsy; Dr. Ather Enam (Aga Khan University) gave an update on brain tumors; Dr. Ismail Khatri (Shifa International) spoke about dementia; Prof. Musadiq Khan (Rawalpindi Medical College) presented his vast experience of carotid endarterectomy in Islamabad; Dr. Tanveer ul Haq (Aga Khan University) presented his data on interventional neuroradiology; Prof. Hasan Aziz (Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center) gave a migraine update; and Dr. Nadir Ali Syed (Aga Khan University) presented a review of the emerging role of stem cells in stroke. Several authors from all over the country presented their research in the form of platform presentations. At the end of each presentation

there was a brief question-answer session where participants showed full involvement and interest.

During the meeting, a poster exhibition had also been arranged where various neurologists displayed their research findings and areas of interest graphically in the form of scientific posters. Participants took keen interest in these posters and found them to be highly informative and interesting. Authors from Liaquat National Hospital and Aga Khan University Hospital (Karachi), Shifa International Hospital (Islamabad), King Edward Medical College (Lahore), and Khyber Medical College (Peshawar) presented their posters on a range of topics, including acquired neuropathies, bilateral cerebellar stroke, migraine, motor neuron disease, parasitic cerebral infections, and other neurological topics.

A sumptuous banquet dinner was arranged to welcome the participants at the serene Daman-e-Koh hill resort on the outskirts of Islamabad. The ambience was impressively incandescent. Three outstanding neurologists were awarded annual PSN awards during a brief ceremony; Dr. Saad Shafqat from Aga Khan University, Karachi, received the Leadership in Neurology Award for Advocacy, Dr. Mughis Sheerani, also from Aga Khan University, received the Best Teacher Award, and Dr. Ismail Khatri (Shifa International Hospital, Islamabad) received the Young Investigator Award. The awards were presented by Prof. Jagjit S. Chopra.

At the dinner, Dr. Saddah, who is the president of the Emirates Neurology Society, said that Pakistan was his second home and he did not feel that he was in another country. Prof. Chopra expressed his special interest in sharing knowledge and latest research findings with Pakistani neurologists and enhancing the scope and quality of neurology in the two countries. He said that the time has come for India and Pakistan to extend cooperation in all areas and make a good example for the world to follow. He also suggested organizing a combined meeting of Indian and Pakistani neurologists in the coming year. He said that he would be looking forward to visiting Pakistan again.

At the end of the conference's last scientific session, shields were given to participants and special mementos were presented to guests from India and UAE. Members of the organizing committee, Dr. Arsalan Ahmad, Dr. Ali Hassan, Dr. Malik Imad Khan, Dr. Mohammad Wasay, Dr. Shaukat Ali, Mr. Anis Alam, Mr. Shafqat Ali Hamdani, Mr. Aziz ur Rasheed, Mr. Azmatullah Quraishi, Col. Saeed

Akhtar, and Mr. Nisar Ahmed were also given special shields. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. Ali Hassan, Secretary of the organizing committee.

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## 4TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF EPILEPSY ASSOCIATION OF PAKISTAN

**Hasan Aziz**

The 4th Annual Conference of Epilepsy Association of Pakistan (EAP) was held on April 21st, 2006 in Rawalpindi. Federal Secretary Health Anwar Mahmood was the chief guest. Mr. Mahmood applauded the Association and pledged government support for its endeavors in looking after the medical and social aspects of people with epilepsy. The conference was well attended by specialists and primary care physicians. Various aspects of epilepsy were covered, in keeping with the target participants.

Session One comprised keynote lectures and generated keen interest. Prof. Jagjit Singh Chopra (Postgraduate Medical Institute, Chandigarh, India), spoke on neurocysticercosis and epilepsy and questioned its prevalence in Pakistan which, to many, was an eye-opener. Prof. Khaleeq uz Zaman's talk on epilepsy surgery in countries with limited resources was very encouraging for epilepsy care providers in tertiary care centers where management of patients with resistant epilepsy is a dilemma. An elaborate talk on resistant epilepsy by Prof. Muhammad Tariq (Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences) was well appreciated.

Session Two was based on presentations of original research in epilepsy, while Session Three was tailor-made for primary care physicians. Lectures on seizure phenomenology, diagnosis and management principles, anticonvulsants and women, and children with epilepsy were the topics of discussion. The final session, a video-conference with Dr. Raj Sheth (Madison, USA) on women with epilepsy had enthusiastic participation.

EAP president Prof. Hasan Aziz spoke on the indigenous epilepsy care model that has been tried and tested over the last five years, with the main focus on creating public awareness and provision of epilepsy care near patients' homes. Pivotal to its sustainability is its original "bottom-up" approach, functioning within the existing health delivery system, diagnostic accuracy by neurologists, and a sustained public health education scheme. Success in these efforts has come from two decades of focused volunteer work and a gradual, stepwise evolution to its current level of complexity. The EAP president summarized the activities of this campaign by touching upon the following themes:

**Baseline survey:** A population-based study to quantify the prevalence of epilepsy; epilepsy-related knowledge, attitude and practice; perception of illness; treatment-seeking behavior; and stigmatization and quality of life, was conducted on a sample of 24,000 (urban and rural) during 1987-1989. The published results reflected the quantum of treatment gap and provided pointers for the future strategy of epilepsy care in Pakistan.

**Human Resource Development and continued CME up to 2001:** Fifty seven clinical practitioners with varying exposure to clinical neurology (including diploma holders, fellows, and doctorates) were trained during the 1990-2001 period. These individuals form an integral part of the volunteer force behind the indigenous epilepsy care model. CME programs on epilepsy continued in this period and approximately 3,000 family physicians were trained all over the country. Public health education through two

publicly broadcast television teaching-interviews are believed to have reached about thirty million people.

**Launching of CECP:** Launched in March, 2001, the Comprehensive Epilepsy Control Program of Pakistan (CECP) is working under the umbrella of the Global Campaign Against Epilepsy (a coordinated effort of the International League Against Epilepsy and WHO). CECP components include setting up of permanent satellite epilepsy centers, holding free epilepsy camps for consultation and awareness, holding school awareness workshops for students and school teachers, affixation of specially designed attractive large epilepsy awareness posters in schools to reduce stigma, and enhancing self image of patients with epilepsy. Public health education was executed through broadcast and print media and by commemorating Epilepsy Day and Epilepsy Walk.

**Outcome of CECP Projects:** Thus far the CECP has set up 47 satellite epilepsy centers, held 43 free epilepsy camps (consultations provided to 8,248 persons of whom 4773 had epilepsy), held 17 school workshops (trained 500 teachers & 2,500 students), affixed 4,600 school awareness posters, reached a general audience of approximately 35 million through print and broadcast media, and trained 350 family physicians, 250 school health doctors and 700 medical students through CME activities.

The impact of CECP's contribution can possibly be gauged by two indirect measures - a 50% reduction in the workload of a large epilepsy clinic in one of the public sector hospitals, and a 139% increase in the rate of anticonvulsant prescriptions as compared with the pre-CECP era. CECP offers a model that is simple and can easily be replicated in other countries where similar constraints of human, financial and technological resources limit the development of full-scale Western models of epilepsy care.

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