NEWS FROM THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CARDIOLOGISTS OF INDIAN ORIGIN

November 1997

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It is a pleasure to invite you to the semiannual meeting to be held on November 9, 1997 during the Scientific Sessions of American Heart Association in Orlando, FL. Please let us know as soon as possible that you will be attending the meeting. Bring a friend, become a life member, and make him / her a life member too. During the past meetings, a concern has been raised about the decline in attendance and a lack of interest by our members. As you all are aware, besides attending grand rounds, meeting with the friends, having a social evening, these meetings also give us an opportunity to recognize the achievements of members of the Indian Cardiology Community, and giving them merit awards. The Young Investigators Award (YIA) program is now firmly established, and I urge the senior members of the Association who are in academics to encourage their juniors-fellows, tutors, assistant professors, etc. to submit their research work for consideration for the YIA. The award carries an honorarium of $500 and a plaque, in addition to the accolade conferred upon them.

Our Association is proud to have members of National and International reputation in their respective fields. However, we are still not recognized as a body by the Cardiology establishment, and have no representation in the National Cardiology societies. It is, therefore, important, that we make our presence felt by joining the association and increasing the membership.

This year, we are conferring a Merit Award to Naranjan Dhalla, PhD, D Sc., Distinguished Professor of Physiology, University of Manitoba. Dr. Dhalla is an internationally known cardiovascular research scientist, his brief career outline is given elsewhere in this newsletter.

Atul R. Laddu, MD, PhD, who is currently the Vice President / President Elect of our Association, has been able to obtain a substantial grant from the Bristol Myers Squibb Company to evaluate cardiac risk in the population from the Indian Subcontinent. He will present further details of the proposal during the meeting.

Please do attend the meeting, bring friends, and guests, and more so your ideas to stimulate our Association.

— Madhukar Deshmukh, MD, FRCP (Edin), FACC

MERIT AWARD

— FALL 1997—

Naranjan Dhalla, PhD, D Sc. will be honored during the AACIO semi annual meeting. Dr. Dhalla is the Director of Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences of the University of Manitoba. He has been chosen to receive the Order of Canada, the highest Civilian Award in Canada.

The Slovak Academy of Sciences has conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctorate of Sciences. Dr. Dhalla is the Executive Director of the International Academy of Cardiovascular Sciences, Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry, and is on the editorial boards of numerous journals.

AACIO is proud to present the merit Award to Dr. Dhalla for his outstanding contributions to Cardiovascular Physiology.

Please inform AACIO of your change of address by using the form on the last page of this publication.

THE "SUCCESSFUL" PRACTICE OF CARDIOLOGY IN BOMBAY

Ivan A. D'Cruz, MD, FRCP, FACC
Professor of Medicine
University of Tennessee, Memphis, TN

In academic circles, acknowledgment of success comes in the wake of important discoveries, or innovative advances. Arguably, R. J. Vakil's description of the efficacy of Rauwolfia's efficacy in hypertension in 1949 was the only modern Indian achievement in this category, although over the past half-century, considerable work has been published on some occasions by a few groups of researchers in major Indian research centers.

However, in this article, I shall dwell no further on academic glory, but instead indulge in reminiscences about how the private practice of Cardiology was conducted "successfully" in Bombay by some members of the profession during the nineteen fifties through seventies. I am referring to financial success, to overflowing waiting rooms, to chauffeured foreign cars, to pockets bulging with cash at the end of the busy day (most of which did not appear on the eminent doctor's income tax return).

The most honorable and honored, among these, were those very few whose reputations as excellent clinicians or superb teachers had carried them upward to the pinnacle of the profession. Vakil, for example, was almost a legend in his institution, his city (Bombay) and indeed in all Western India. I remember him lecturing to packed capacity auditoria, with crowds of postgraduates overflowing into the adjacent hallways.

How did the other "successful" internists and cardiologists achieve burgeoning affluence, and waiting rooms as packed as the third class compartments of the Indian trains during rush hours ?

Some had high political connections, so that state legislators, municipal counselors, and officials at the top of the government pyramid flocked to them. Some had rich community resources, having had the good fortune to be born into an ethnic-linguistic group laden with wealthy businessmen or industrialists. Yet others had valuable social or family links to luminaries of film, sports, or religious fame. The effulgence of glamor or awe that surrounded such personages cast a wide glow to which the general public, like moths, gravitated.

A few cardiologists, undistinguished for their academic or clinical attainments, achieved publicity by organizing international meetings. To these, pharmaceutical firms were persuaded to donate generously, and the money was used to tempt renowned figures from Europe and America

(continued on page 4)

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Pravin M. Shah, MD, FACC, who is the past president of AACIO, is well known to the cardiology community. His contributions to Echocardiography are universally recognized. Dr. Shah is the program director of many courses on echocardiography. Recently, the broadcast of Dr. Shah's Satellite Teleconference, live from ACC "ECHO 2000" has been immensely popular.

Jason Mehta. Two years ago, ACCIO presented a Young Investigator's Award to a12 year old Jason, who presented his work on "Intake of Antioxidants among American Cardiologists". Jason published his work in the June 1997 issue of the American Journal of Cardiology, making him the youngest author to ever publish in the 32 year history of the Journal, and AACIO is proud to recognize his talent. Jason is the son of Jawahar Mehta, MD, PhD, who is the member of the Executive Committee of AACIO, and Professor of Medicine and Physiology at the University of Florida.

Prof. Ivan J. Pinto, MD, MRCP, FACC. It is with profound sadness that we report the untimely death of Prof. Pinto. Many of us from Bombay knew Prof. Pinto as a colleague and a teacher. His obituary is written by Ivan D'Cruz, MD, FRCP, FACC in this newsletter.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON UPDATE AND RECENT ADVANCES IN CARDIOLOGY

An international Conference on Update and Recent Advances in Cardiology and Safari of South Africa and Victoria Falls will be held from July 10-26, 1998 in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The conference director is Navin C. Nanda, MD. A total of 18 CME credit hours will be given through the University of Alabama at Birmingham. For further information, please contact Navin C. Nanda, MD, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Heart Station SW / S 102, Birmingham, AL 35233, Phone 205-934-8256, FAX 205-934-6747.

For information regarding travel, contact Indira Patel at Sun-Land Travel & Tours, Inc., 2374-A Jericho Turnpike, Garden City, NY 11040, Phone 516-741-9555, FAX 516-741-9098.

OBITUARY

PROF. IVAN JOSEPH PINTO, MD, MRCP (LOND & EDIN), FACC (1925-1997)

The death occurred on March 14, 1997 in Bombay of Prof. Ivan J. Pinto, formerly the Chief of Cardiology at the G. S. Medical College-K. E. M. Hospital. Since this institution is well represented in the members of the AACIO, and since some of its most active members were very closely associated with Prof. Pinto as his students, house staff, or junior faculty over the past three or four decades, it is fitting that he be commemorated in this Newsletter.

Prof. Pinto was born in 1925. He began medical school at the G. S. Medical College during the post WW II years, and went on to do his residency and finally received MD degree from Bombay University in 1951. Prof. Pinto spent the next few years in the USA, and then in the UK. In Chicago, Prof. Pinto did a cardiology fellowship at the Michael Reese Hospital, which at that time enjoyed one of the highest reputations in ECG and arrhythmia diagnosis, because of the splendid original work and teaching of two great workers in the field, Prof. Pick and Prof. Langendorf. Prof. Pinto developed an interest and expertise in electrocardiography and arrhythmias which remained with him all through his career. In Bombay, Prof. Pinto was considered a local Guru on this topic.

In the UK, Prof. Pinto did his post at the Hammersmith Hospital and passed the MRCP (Edin) and MRCP (Lond) examinations in 1955.

Upon returning to Bombay in 1956, Prof. Pinto was appointed as the Honorary Associate Professor of Medicine at the G. S. Medical College & K. E. M. Hospital Institution. Cardiology at this institution was in its ascendancy, having risen by the achievements of Doctors Vakil and Datey, who established its eminence on the national and international scene. Doctors Datey and Pinto were the prime organizers of the World Congress of Cardiology held in Delhi in 1966.

Prof. Pinto's main academic interests were arrhythmias and coronary risk factors, the latter mainly in Indians. He was the President of the Cardiology Society of India in 1978, and a frequent participant of symposia, panel discussions and scientific programs, not only in India, but also abroad. Prof. Pinto was appointed as a W. H. O. Consultant and Asian member on the International Society of Cardiology Council on Atherosclerosis, ischemic heart disease and occlusive vascular disease. He was elevated to the FRCP (Edin) and FRCP (Lond), and to the rank of Professor in 1972. He was the head of the Department of Cardiology at the K. E. M. Hospital from 1980 to 1983. A pioneer of pacemaker therapy in India, he started the first pacemaker bank in India for supplying pacemakers to the poor, with donations from abroad. He organized the first Pacing-E. P. Conference in Bombay in 1983.

Prof. Pinto often said that cardiac research was easy at advanced Western centers, where plenty of money, equipment and efficient technical help were available. He felt that the research had most merit when done in countries such as India, where funds and facilities were always in short supply. These sentiments apply, of course, to Prof. Pinto himself and his research efforts. His interesting conversations, especially on the dynamics of medical politics, his amiability and benign idiosyncrasies, persist in the fond memories of the numerous members of the AACIO, whose mentor he was at one time.

The bio data for this obituary was kindly provided by Dr Robin Pinto, son of the deceased, who is a practicing Cardiologist in Bombay, by Dr. Avinash Vengsarkar, successor to Prof. Pinto as the Head of cardiology at the K. E. M. Hospital, Dr. H. Kulkarni of the K. E. M. Hospital and by Dr. L. S. Shah of Nair Hospital, Bombay.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ISCAT TRIAL

AACIO is pleased to let its membership know that the Bristol Myers Squibb Company (BMS) has recently awarded a grant of about $115,000 to AACIO to study the high cardiac risk factors among people (Indian Subcontinent Community Assessment Trial, ISCAT).

Initially the trial will be initiated in the State of Indiana (In Marion, IN, and Indianapolis, IN). Later on, the trial may be expanded to other regions of Indiana, or to other states in the United States of America.

The investigators for this trial will be (in alphabetical order): Subodh Gupte, MD, FACC; Prakash Joshi, MD, FACC, Rashid Khairi, MD, and Shashi Shekhar, MD. Drs. Gupte and Joshi are the life members of the AACIO.

The AACIO wants to thank BMS for their generous support to the AACIO. The protocol will be presented to the Executive committee of the AACIO on November 9, 1997. We will keep our members informed about the progress of the study in the future.

The "Successful" Practice (continued from page 2)

to grace the conference. These V. I. P.'s, in turn, were never-failing magnets to attract the attention of news media. Newspapers and the local TV had broad coverage of the event, with obligatory photographs of the V. I. P.'s on the dais next to the Health Minister and the President or the Secretary of the conference. The latter thus imprinted themselves on the public mind as "well-known cardiologists". Two or three attained local eminence by getting elected or appointed to high civic office. A couple of others, with close connections to the highest strata of political power, got themselves named to prestigious national awards, though few could think of anything brilliantly original or momentous they had done in Cardiology to merit this exalted honor.

One individual, a favorite in entertainment profession circles, rode about the town in a chauffeured Mercedes Benz fitted out with a back-seat reading light which he read the latest journals, and had facilities for making coffee in the car. His clientele was enormously impressed by the persona of an extremely busy specialist, surely his cardiology was as modern and advanced as his automobile technology. Another individual, a familiar figure on the International scene, established close connections with the top brass of multinational pharmaceutical companies. He was the first to obtain the newest anti-arrhythmic, beta-blocker or diuretic agents and to perform clinical trials with these agents, thus acquiring a reputation for knowing about and also possessing the latest knowledge in cardiac therapy, ahead of everyone else.

All the strategies mentioned above, short-cuts to local fame, were available after all to a privileged , or a lucky minority. Another technique, available to anyone who chose to resort to it, was fee-splitting (Kickback in the American idiom). Fee-splitting was unknown in Bombay until the middle of the 20th century. The first specialists on the Bombay medical scene, officers of the (British) Indian Medical Service, would not of course stoop to such practices, nor did the elder Indian consulting physicians and surgeons who were raised in the British tradition. I recall that this older generation of G. P.'s also remained free of this unethical contagion. It was among the younger internists, cardiologists and G. P.'s who entered the profession in the fifties and later, that the egregious symbiosis of fee-splitting became increasingly prevalent.

A few specialists, sinking even lower on the shameful moral scale, employed hospital orderlies as touts to scrounge for potential customers among the public hospital outpatients, and then escort them to their consulting rooms to ensure preferential treatment in return for consultation fees.

Another less sleazy way of forging bonds of friendship between the specialist and his practice "feeders" was to host lavish parties. Having being wined, dined and welcomed into the bosom of a "successful" physician's social circle, at his palatial residence, had a powerful trammeling effect on one's loyalties of referral. This practice (widely prevalent even here, even now) is at par with other traditional "currencies of goodwill" such as bottles of Scotch, large boxes of halva and baskets of mangoes.

The cardiologists and practices I have referred to above, are clinically superb or commercially enterprising, charismatic or exploitative, all "successful", flourished decades ago. The manipulations, maneuvers and strategies which ensure "success" may have changed since then. Then, as is now, there were others whose professional conduct was beyond reproach, whose hands were unblemished by the taint of unethical practices. They sought success of a different kind, they chose the high road of professional accomplishment. They may or may not have acquired wealth and renown, but they did gain the high esteem and deep respect of their peers, which can be quite a different reward.

FLASH!

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AACIO is giving an incentive to the members for renewing their life memberships ($600, one time payment), or memberships ($60, payable yearly).

Under this program, if you become a life member, you will be given vouchers for 15,000 miles on Delta Airlines; and if you become a regular member, you will be given vouchers for 1500 miles on Delta Airlines (Delta gives you free round trip ticket in the US and Canada for just 25,000 miles!). These miles then can be deposited in your Delta Sky Miles account, and will enable you to earn free trips all around the World. If you are not a member of the Delta Sky Miles Program, there will be instructions on the vouchers, which will enroll you instantly in the program.

AACIO therefore encourages very strongly its members to take advantage of this rare opportunity. We have bought from Delta Airlines a limited number of miles, so this offer is good only until the vouchers last! Remember, the miles are absolutely **FREE** to you!

Please send your membership dues by check (made payable to **AACIO**), or pay by Discover, Master Card, or VISA to the following address:

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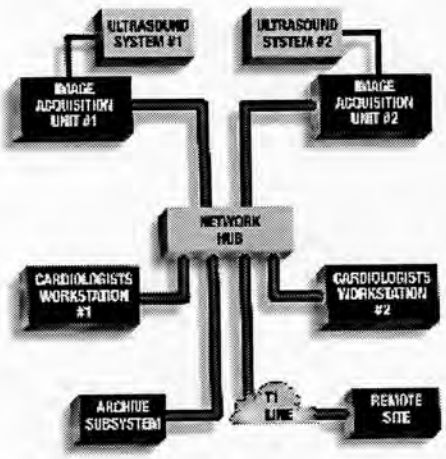

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The **AACIO** invites its members and their guests to the Grand Rounds given by Sandra Jean Lewis, MD, FACC, who is currently the Director of Cardiac Research at the Legacy Health Systems in Portland, Oregon. Dr. Lewis will speak on the New Perspectives from Cholesterol And Recurrent Events (CARE) trial. Dr. Lewis will also review the outcomes in older patients, female patients, and diabetics.

Place: Hotel Radisson, 8444 International Dr., Orlando, FL, 407-345-0505

Program: 5:30 - 6:30 PM - Executive Committee Meeting
6:30 - 7:00 PM - Social Hour
7:00 - 7:35 PM - Grand Rounds
7:35 - 7:45 PM - Q & A
7:45 - 8:00 PM - Presentation of YIA and Merit Awards
8:00 - 10:00 PM - Dinner

Please send information about your attendance to:
Atul R. Laddu, MD, PhD, FACC
Vice President, AACIO
1216 N. Claridge Way
Carmel, IN 46032
Fax 317-580-1245

The Semi-Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, November 9, 1997.

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