

USHA CHAKRAVARTHY, MD, PhD, CBE

WHAT INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION TO BECOME A RETINA SPECIALIST?

My first exposure to ophthalmology was probably the moment I realized how much one can learn about systemic health from an examination of the eye. I was also fascinated by microsurgical techniques and the precision with which one could perform highly complex procedures.

TELL US ABOUT A PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT OF WHICH YOU ARE PARTICULARLY PROUD.

In 1993, I submitted a paper on the use of radiotherapy in wet age-related macular degeneration, which was not only fast-tracked for publication in the *British Journal of Ophthalmology* but also evoked an accompanying editorial. As a young trainee, I was overwhelmed by this and the interest and feedback that was generated by my work.

More recently, I was awarded the title of Commander in the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for clinical services to ophthalmology and research. Receiving my award from Prince Charles ranks as an important and defining moment in my career.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHICH MEETINGS TO ATTEND EACH YEAR?

The field of retina has expanded tremendously, and there are now at least two meetings each month that could be classified as international. In the early years of my career I specifically chose to attend two major conferences annually. One was the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) because it caters both to basic scientists and to clinicians and because it features presentations on cutting-edge research. I have supported ARVO for more than 25 years, achieving Gold Fellow status 5 years ago and having served on several ARVO committees, including the program committee,



the awards committee, and the international committee.

For my other meeting choice, I selected either Euretina or Retina Subspecialty Day at the Royal College of Ophthalmologists Annual Congress. Since 2005, I have also attended Retina Subspecialty Day at the American Academy of Ophthalmology Annual Meeting as invited faculty. In recent years, I have traveled to about one meeting per month, but these occur by invitation from the program committees.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG FEMALE OPHTHALMOLOGISTS INTERESTED IN PURSUING A CAREER IN THE RETINA SPECIALTY?

Retina is a fascinating and rewarding area in which to work. It is never boring, and the field has evolved dramatically. A host of diseases have been described in the past decade owing to leaps in retinal imaging technology and genetics. Technological developments in molecular diagnostics and even

greater improvements in functional imaging undoubtedly will lead to further advances in our understanding of retinal health and disease. I would say that this specialty is fertile for both research and the practical delivery of high-quality care, and it has immense potential for job satisfaction. I would give this advice to all aspiring retina candidates, not just young females.

WHAT HOBBIES DO YOU ENJOY TO HELP RELIEVE STRESS?

I enjoy aerobic exercise, particularly Zumba. I cycle and play tennis throughout the summer and autumn. I don't like cycling on ice or in the snow, so my bike goes into cold storage in the winter months. ■

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