

1999. My interest has always been in dealing with the complex brain and spinal surgery. I was trained by Prof. Gaab of Germany in the Endoscopic third Ventriculostomy, a technique which I then started for the first time in Pune in 2000.

The human brain fascinated me back when I was an undergraduate and I found it to be a marvel of nature. It is the most delicate and structurally intricate amongst all the organs and it gives us our human status. It is the brain which sets us apart from other animals.

I started working in neurosurgery from my days as an intern and then got the opportunity to be get trained in the top national institutes in India. I wrote a thesis on computer guided neurosurgery even before I officially joined the neurosurgical training.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION LIKE TODAY, ARE BRAIN AND SPINAL AILMENTS ON THE RISE?

Spinal problems are very common in any society. Back pain, neck pain, sciatica, cervical spondylosis, spinal tumours...the list is very big and the problems very frequent. Neurosurgery is probably the only super speciality in which, systematic clinical and operative training is given in the field of spinal surgery. This training lasts for three to five years.

WHAT ABOUT THE BRAIN TUMOURS? AND HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THE PATIENT'S DISTRESS WHEN THEY HEAR WORDS SUCH AS CANCER, TUMOUR, GROWTH ETC.

The word brain tumour generally strikes terror in the public's mind. However with the modern technology and progressive understanding about the brain, these tumours can be surmounted and many of our patients have gone home happily after successful removal of such tumours.

It is the truth though that these are difficult pathologies to deal with and need a combined effort of good surgical technique, excellent radiation therapy planning and execution, chemotherapy and good neurological rehabilitation. It is because of this union of concepts that the brain tumour foundation has come into being. Sadly these tumours occur with the same frequency across all the socio economic strata and many of the affected patients come from economically challenging background. At our brain tumour center, the socio economical aspect is also taken into account wherein we help the deserving patients of brain tumour at con-



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cessional rate.

Strictly speaking the term brain tumour includes the tumours inside the brain matter, but conventionally, all the tumours inside the skull are termed as brain tumours.

Brain tumours are of various types and grossly they can be divided into two categories- cancerous (malignant) and non cancerous (or benign).

Not all brain tumours are cancerous. With the modern radiological advances like MRI and CTscans, diagnosis has become remarkably easy if high degree of suspicion is maintained by a physician.

The real challenge posed by any brain tumour is its location. Even if it is benign(non cancerous) these tumours can be deep seated and difficult to manage surgically. The instruments and modern gadgets prove very crucial here. But I always think that man behind these machines is very important. We have to remember that these machines are our slaves and not vice-versa.

HOW BENEFICIAL IS A FUNCTIONAL MRI?

Functional magnetic resonance imaging or functional MRI (fMRI) is a type of specialized MRI scan used to measure the hemodynamic response (change in blood flow) related to neural activity in the brain or spinal cord. It is one of the most recently developed forms of neuroimaging. A functional MRI is done using a 3 TESLA technique and it gives you the mapping of the cognitive function.

TELL US ABOUT THE SYNAPSE BRAIN AND SPINE FOUNDATION.

This is a foundation we initiated to help the needy neurosurgical patients. We have been performing high end brain and spine surgeries without compromising the expertise and the equipment quality but in an affordable price through this foundation.

HOW DO YOU VIEW YOUR WORK IN THIS FOUNDATION?

You see as the founder of this trust, I have my responsibilities. But I do not glorify this much. This charity is possible due to generous donations of so many people all over the world. Still we are severely short of the funds. Like the famous story of Abraham Lincoln, in which he says that all acts done are through some selfish motive, I think I work for this foundation for selfish motive. When I am operating on a difficult brain tumour, I feel challenged and derive satisfaction. When a patient of trigeminal neuralgia is experiencing pain relief after surgery, it makes me happy. This has been my philosophy behind

my work ...for the foundation and otherwise.

CAN YOU KINDLY HIGHLIGHT SOME OF THE MORE COMMON AILMENTS AFFECTING THE SPINE AND BRAIN?

The problems like headache and back pain are, as you know, very frequent. Brain tumours, brain hemorrhage, brain aneurysms, stroke, Parkinson's disease.....the list of brain ailments is very long. As a neurosurgeon I can tell you that conditions like brain tumours are more frequently identified as the diagnostic modalities like MRI and CT scan are widely available.

WHAT ABOUT THE SPINAL PROBLEMS?

Neurospinal problems are indeed very common. Back pains, pains in the lower back and neck is very common. Starting from simple sprains, osteoporosis, and the list can reach up to intradural tumours. These need good clinical evaluation and treatment.

CAN PEOPLE HAVE AN ACCESS TO MATERIAL ABOUT THE NEUROSURGICAL PROBLEMS TO SATISFY THEIR QUERIES?

Of course. We have started a website- www.neurosurgery-pune.com for this very purpose. One can visit this site and if they have any queries, I will be glad to answer them on the mail id given on that site.

WHAT WAS THE ONE THING A GRATEFUL PATIENT HAS SAID TO YOU THAT YOU HAVE NEVER FORGOTTEN?

I meet so many patients every day. Every patient has different personality and reactions. Some look at my efforts as merely something done in exchange for the fees paid whilst the other end of the spectrum consists of people who call you God. As I told you before Ravneet, I do not work for somebody else's

appreciation. The work itself is a reward for me as I derive satisfaction in operating in challenging environment.

I remember a patient...a farmer whose wife had brain tumour. When the time came for discharge, he said that he did not have enough money to pay the entire bill.

After six months, he came back with vegetables from his farm nearly two sacks full. You see, this shows me he had not forgotten the efforts I had put in removing his wife's tumour and though he was unable to pay, he remembered me after six months and came back with the best he could give me...even when, really speaking, he had no need of me. I have not been able to forget this man.

HAVE YOU VISITED KENYA?

In fact I was in Kenya with my wife, son and our family friend in September. We enjoyed our stay there. We visited the coastal town of Malindi and then Maasai Mara.

I can never forget the beauty of Mara. Apart from the astonishing wild life, I was captivated by the horizons of Maasai land and the different hues of the grass and the sky.

AND FINALLY DOCTOR WHAT ARE YOUR OTHER INTERESTS?

I have been a keen sportsman from young age and used to play competitive basketball and badminton representing my state but now of course I don't. Presently, I love to participate in long distance cycling.

Indian classical music interests me immensely and I play the sitar. Music helps me to maintain my peace of mind in a busy and taxing schedule. I have found it to be rather soothing and helpful when played in the operation theatre during surgeries.

