



Proceedings from the BAPIO Scotland Annual Meeting

The Scottish Division of the British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (@BapioScotland) organised the first in-person Annual meeting at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh after the pandemic.

15 July 2023

Vipin Zamvar (Chair, BAPIO Scotland)

True to South Asian/ Indian tradition, the meeting started with the lighting of the lamp by Professor Andrew Elder, President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. Ramesh Mehta CBE, President of BAPIO, explained that darkness signified ignorance and light represents knowledge. This meeting was meant to impart knowledge, exchange ideas, and gain new insights.

Cite as: Zamvar, V. (2023) Proceedings from the BAPIO Scotland Annual Meeting. Sushruta J Health Pol vol 15; Issue 3: 1-4 DOI 10.38192/15.3.10

Article information
Submitted 6 Aug 23
Published 6 Oct 23

Diversity, Equality & Inclusion

The first session on diversity, equality and inclusion introduced Ramesh Mehta as the first speaker. Honouring him for his lifetime contribution, the Chair said,

“Whether we realise it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not, many of us in the room have benefitted from what Ramesh and BAPIO have done over the last twenty-five years to create a level playing field for all. He has always spoken out against injustice when he has seen it.”

Ramesh Mehta described the various initiatives that BAPIO had taken. These included.

- the development of the 'Dignity at Work Standards '1 adopted by NHS England and implemented in different pilot sites in Leicester and London.
- Su Young (Ophthalmology Clinical Fellow) presented her research findings about differential attainment in Ophthalmology in the UK and the initiatives now being taken by the Royal College of Ophthalmology.² BAPIO led the series of workshops in 2021, 'Bridging the Gap', which spearheaded the holistic re-examination of the evidence leading to DA and the initiatives needed to eradicate it. ³ Imran Liaquat (Neurosurgeon, Edinburgh) reflected using personal experiences on subconscious bias and racism plaguing the NHS workplace.⁴ Pragnesh Bhatt (Neurosurgeon, Aberdeen)⁵ spoke about his life story and how attending a BAPIO workshop twenty years ago, organised by the BAPIO North West Division, helped him onto a path that culminated in him becoming a Consultant in Aberdeen. He described how he had been denied a chance to sit the FRCS (Neurosurgery) exams two decades ago and how he had organised the same exam two years ago in Aberdeen. This was a remarkable journey against so many odds.
- Nicola Cotter (Head of General Medical Council, Scotland) discussed the Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion initiatives. She described GMC's targets for eliminating disproportionality in fitness to practice referrals.

Innovations

During the 'Innovations in the NHS' session, Santosh Bongale (ED Consultant, Paisley)⁶ spoke about the initiatives he has developed in his hospital for allowing International Medical Graduates (IMGs) taster placements. These placements allow IMGs to experience NHS work first-hand and settle down to life in the NHS.⁷ Liesje Turner from Morecambe Bay⁸ spoke about the BAPIO training academy⁹ and how it had helped Indian doctors prepare for work in the NHS. This is a win-win situation as it allows Indian doctors who wish to come to the UK to get GMC registration and mentorship from experienced UK doctors, and it also helps NHS hospitals face staff shortages and find it challenging to recruit.

Rajeev Gupta (Pediatrician, Yorkshire) discussed the potential contributions of Ayurveda to the NHS in managing chronic conditions.¹⁰ Robert Rea (Innoscot Health)¹¹ spoke about helping clinicians with new ideas to move forward to the next step, protect their ideas with patents and then turn those ideas into commercial success. Barry Alan (Medtronic UK) introduced the Touch Surgery App,¹² which allows surgical procedures to be recorded and stored remotely. Surgeons can download these anytime on their phones or laptops and be used for training.

Retirement & Personal Finances

There were two fascinating talks on investments and pensions by Jay Thind and Pree Panchmatia from Thind Wealth Advisory. ¹³ They provided valuable insights into NHS Pensions and Retirement planning. The delegates offered positive feedback and had several questions for them after the event.

Professor Raj Bhopal CBE¹⁴ spoke about his adventures in the '*Land of Retirement*'

during COVID-19 and how remaining engaged with healthcare was enjoyable and fruitful. Prof. John Frank talked about the health inequalities by social class in Scotland.¹⁵ Ananta Dave (President of the British Indian Psychiatrist Association and CMO Black Country Integrated Care Board)¹⁶ gave a compelling lecture on the challenges facing “Women Leaders in the NHS” and why the health service would be more efficient and compassionately led if the gender imbalance was addressed.

There were 38 abstracts submitted to the meeting. Three were selected for the podium presentation and 7 for the poster presentation. The prize winners were.

- First prize, Shubham Jain (Aberdeen);
- Second prize, Fatima Zain (Fife); and
- third prize, Helmi Ahmed (Middlesbrough).

At the session on “Celebrating Achievements”, Professor Andrew Elder (President of the Royal College of Physicians), Subodh Dave (Dean, Royal College of Psychiatrists), Aman Coonar (President-elect, Society of Cardiothoracic Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland), and Nitin Gambhir (Lead Dean Director in Scotland) spoke of their journeys from medical school days to the present.

The last session was on recent advances in managing Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (Ghourab Choudhury, Chest Physician, Edinburgh¹⁷) and using Artificial Intelligence in Plastic Surgery (Vidya Mehendale, Plastic Surgeon, Edinburgh University¹⁸).

Mr Bijay Selvaraj, Consul General of India at the Edinburgh Consulate¹⁹, was the Chief Guest.

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