



**Faculty at Chennai conference. Standing at the back, Ennapadam Krishnamoorthy (local organiser & speaker, Chennai, India). Back Row: Michael Perdices (Sydney, Australia), Barbara Wilson (Bury St Edmunds, UK), Robyn Tate (Sydney, Australia), James Malec (Indianapolis, USA), Narinder Kapur (London, UK). Front Row: Dr Srivatsa (Chennai, India), Nithya Mohan (local organiser & speaker, Chennai, India), Farzana Mulla (Pune, India), Urvashi Shah (Mumbai, India) and Suvarna Alladi (Hyderabad, India).**

## Conference call from Chennai, India

### Narinder Kapur

*I recently had an opportunity, along with other colleagues, to take part in a neuropsychology workshop in Chennai, India. This article presents some of the highlights of that meeting.*

**T**HE WORKSHOP was sponsored by the World Federation of Neurological Rehabilitation (WNFR), and also locally by the Chatnath Trust, a charitable trust in Chennai. The conference was organised by a Chennai-based neurosciences centre, NeuroKrish ([www.neurokrish.com](http://www.neurokrish.com)). The WNFR sponsorship was part of their 'flying faculty' scheme, whereby travel costs for faculty are funded to teach in countries where a particular rehab discipline may not be well developed. The 'flying faculty' has traditionally comprised medically qualified staff, and this was the first time that psychologists had been funded to take part in the scheme, thanks to the efforts of Barbara Wilson.

There were both international and Indian faculty; the international faculty included Barbara Wilson from UK, Robyn Tate and Michael Perdices from Australia, James Malec from Indianapolis and myself. The workshop mainly featured talks and clinical case presentations related to neuropsychological rehabilitation, though one session was devoted to diagnostic issues relating to dementia. Topics covered in the sessions included rehabilitation of cognitive, behavioural and emotional disorders; overviews of stroke, traumatic brain injury and encephalitis; and talks on neuropsychological assessment

and combining research with clinical practice, in particular the use of single-case study designs. There were around 20 poster presentations that highlighted neuropsychology research and clinical practice in India.

An important feature of the meeting, since it was taking place in India, was clinical case presentations by speakers from India. This brought home points that may be of relevance to UK neuropsychologists in clinical practice, since many of us see an increasing number of south Asian patients in our NHS work. Thus, in India there appeared to be more frequent and more significant issues relating to insight and how this could best be overcome – this would invariably involve specific efforts related to education, explanation and feedback to patients. Family dynamics appeared to be more significant in a number of the Indian clinical cases, as there are often tendencies such as over-protecting a patient or making key decisions for them. Here again, education and communication issues were key, as well as how to bring about interventions in a tactful fashion. The effects of literacy on executive function task performance was also borne out by some of the talks by Indian speakers. Some of the talks reminded us that investigations and treatments that we take for granted may not be available,



**Narinder Kapur presents the proceeds from the book fair to Mr S. Murali, head of local Chennai charity, Sevalaya**

or only available at high cost, in countries such as India – this includes tests for rarer forms of encephalitis, amyloid PET scans for Alzheimer’s disease, and some genetic tests; it also includes treatments such as intravenous immunoglobulin and plasma exchange for auto-immune encephalitis. The meeting highlighted conditions that we see relatively seldom in the West but which are common in India, such as HIV-related cerebral pathology, which may sometimes take the form of TB meningitis.

The neuropsychology rehabilitation workshop also featured an endowment lecture by Barbara Wilson, the endowment being in memory of a local Chennai luminary, K. Gopalakrishna. Her lecture, *The Art and Science of Neurorehabilitation*, featured in the local newspaper, and was also attended by members of the public.

In a previous issue of this newsletter (Summer 2013), I described a ‘conference kindness’ scheme that I ran in 2013 during a workshop in Kolkata. I repeated a similar scheme in Chennai, and decided to call it a ‘Gandhi book fair’, and also supplemented it with a Gandhi scholarship scheme. The book fair included neuropsychology books and tests that colleagues in the UK and elsewhere had donated, along with some from my own collection, and which I shipped to India. We priced the books at 100–500 rupees (£1–5) each. No sooner had we displayed the books on the first morning of the meeting than the tables were surrounded by delegates, and most of the books were gone within an hour! We managed to raise 42,000 Rupees (£420), and I topped this up to make a donation of 50,000 rupees, which went to a local charity that looks after orphaned children and also elderly in need ([www.sevalaya.org](http://www.sevalaya.org)). As I mentioned in my Summer 2013 article, the book fair achieved a ‘triple whammy’ – individuals were able in some cases to dispose of surplus books that may have been taking up space, delegates managed to purchase books at a knock-down price, and a local charity, Sevalaya, benefited from the sales (see picture above).

One of the messages that came through from the talks by Indian speakers at this conference and also at the 2013 Kolkata conference was the relative dearth of resources and expertise relating to neuropsychological rehabilitation in India, especially outside the six major urban cities. I therefore ran some other ‘Gandhian’ initiatives to help out. The American College of Rehabilitation Medicine has recently published, in the form of a 133-page manual, an evidence-based review of cognitive rehabilitation, which includes recommendations for clinical practice. I donated copies of the manual to neuropsychologists in each of the major neurosciences centres in India, as well as to those in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan. I also sponsored four scholars from India, a scholar from Bangladesh and a scholar from Sri Lanka, to attend the conference (a scholar from Pakistan was also sponsored but visa problems meant she could not attend). These ‘Gandhi scholars’ were provided with rehab resources that included the textbook, *Neuropsychological Rehabilitation* by Wilson et al. (2009) and the 2013 edition of the *Brain Injury Workbook* by Trevor Powell.

The problems that the Gandhi scholar from Pakistan had in attending the meeting highlighted issues that arise when some countries, such as India and China, put in place a ‘conference visa’ system. This system entails international delegates attending a conference having to apply for such a visa, rather than a standard tourist visa. In the case of India, this involved getting security clearance from three separate ministries, and the whole procedure had the potential of being a bureaucratic nightmare, as it turned out to be for the Pakistani scholar. A paradoxical positive side effect of this debacle was that I discovered how technology such as Skype can be used to enable a delegate in another country to see and hear much of a meeting – with my iPad I ‘skyped’ some of the presentations from Chennai meeting to the non-attending Pakistani scholar in Karachi. If both parties have

FaceTime or WhatsApp, a smartphone could be used to transmit a view of the speaker, with sound, while an iPad could be used to Skype the slides.

We had 139 delegates to the meeting, and judging by the questions and active audience participation, it was a great success. To combine such a meeting with some form of Gandhian initiative was an added bonus and made it all very worthwhile.

### Declaration

A similar version of this article appeared as a BMJ blog, April 24, 2013.

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important component of future REF exercises, the portal may provide a valuable route through which such impact can be facilitated.

See [www.bps.org.uk/impact/search](http://www.bps.org.uk/impact/search) for further details or email [Lisa.MorrisonCoulthard@bps.org.uk](mailto:Lisa.MorrisonCoulthard@bps.org.uk) for a submission form.



## Introducing the new newsletter Editor

MY NAME is Jo Iddon and I would like to introduce myself as the next Co-ordinating Editor for the DoN quarterly newsletter. I have a neuropsychology/clinical psychology/CBT background and have worked in a range of settings – academic, clinical, commercial, medico-legal, etc. I have special interests in concussion, brain injury and dementia and am focussed on developments within the emerging integrative field of Neuro-CBT. To complete the picture I am married, have three young boys and live in London.

The present Editor, Sara Shavel-Jessop, and team have worked hard to bring us an excellent quarterly publication over the past few years. However, it is still a relatively new publication and I would like to start to develop its potential more broadly as a forum for articles, ideas, book reviews, reports of events, correspondence and announcements. I will be working closely with our new sub-editors as well as with Cheryl Davis our Communications Officer via Facebook and Twitter as more instant communication and discussion channels.

BUT... we cannot do this alone and to this end, I invite you – the members and readers – to become more involved. Watch this space, but in the first instance please email me your ideas for improvements, contributions, special issues, or anything else at [jo@joiddon.com](mailto:jo@joiddon.com).



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