

Beyond Medicine

Dr. Pandiaraja's practice in the medical field and helping the needy

By: R.N. Sugitha Nadarajah

The journey of Dr. Jayabal Pandiaraja, Researcher in Spotlight for this issue of *Journal of Surgical Dermatology*, to become a doctor began the moment he enrolled to study Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBBS) at Mahatma Gandhi Medical College and Research Institute, Pondicherry, India. However, just like any other ambitious student, Dr. Pandiaraja had his own share of challenges to overcome prior to entering the medical field.

“The [pre-university] school that I studied at didn't have enough infrastructures and facilities,” Dr. Pandiaraja recalls. “But the encouragement which I got from my teachers was phenomenal. They were a strong driving force for me to achieve excellent results during my studies,” he says.

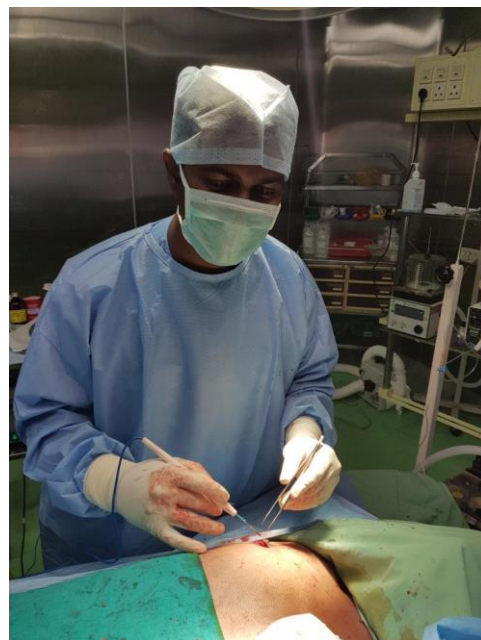
Dr. Pandiaraja also had to overcome the guage barrier. “The teaching language [English] in undergraduate is different from my school's teaching language [Tamil]. When I entered my undergraduate medical training, I wasn't able to understand most of the modern medical terms,” says the researcher.

“To overcome this difficulty, I spent most of the time in library and referring to medical dictionary.” he adds. “In due course, I managed to adapt to it and I got gold medals in most of the subjects.” Consequently, Dr. Pandiaraja successfully obtained First Class in all subjects, with Distinctions in Biochemistry, Pharmacology, Pathology, Microbiology, Forensic Medicine, Preventive and Social Medicine.

Upon the completion of his degree, he continued with an internship at the same institute. Dr. Pandiaraja then furthered his studies by pursuing a Master in General Surgery at Government Stanley Medical College and Hospital (SMC), Chennai, which has the reputation of being one of the oldest top medical institutions in India. Some of the notable alumni of SMC include world's top liver transplant surgeon Prof. Dr. Mohamed Rela, former Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner for the county of Los Angeles Dr. Lakshmanan Sathyavagiswaran, and orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Balu Sankaran who is best known for setting up the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) in 1972.



Dr. Pandiaraja (middle) during the Annual Conference of Tamilnadu and Pondicherry Chapter of the Association of Surgeons of India (Photo credit: Dr. Pandiaraja)



Dr. Pandiaraja during a surgical procedure (Photo credit: Dr. Pandiaraja)

Dr. Pandiaraja immensely credits his university mentor for steering him towards General Surgery. “During my post-graduate period, my beloved professor Dr. Vishwanathan was the driving force for me to take up this department as a specialty,” says Dr. Pandiaraja. Professor Dr. S. Vishwanathan is the Director of Institute of General Surgery at Madras Medical College, Chennai, who had received Best Doctor award from the Government of Tamilnadu for his excellence.

“He is my mentor and driving force for me to publish research article and papers in both national and international journals. His constant encouragement made me to do lot of research work in the field of surgery,” adds Dr. Pandiaraja.

He also gave enormous appreciation to his family for their encouragement during the difficulties he underwent while studying, “The lesson which I learned from my childhood period is ‘Hard work never fails’,” he says. “I have always been encouraged by my dear wife Dr. A. Shalini, my daughter Aakanksha, and my parents,” says the surgeon. As result of his hard work and dedication, Dr. Pandiaraja was awarded the coveted Prof. A. Venugopal

Gold Medal in urology, which is the highest recognition given to excellent scholars of urology at Stanley Medical College.

The surgeon, who has undergone extensive training in upper gastrointestinal endoscopy, laparoscopy, trauma and emergency care, is also a member of the Academy of Advanced Dental Research (AADR). In addition, Dr. Pandiaraja is a lifetime member in the Association of Surgeons of India, Association of Minimal Access Surgeons of India, Indian Hernia Society, Society of Endoscopic and Laparoscopic Surgeons of India, and Indian Association of Endocrine Surgeons.

To further enhance his skills and expertise as a physician, Dr. Pandiaraja never missed the opportunity to attend various conferences around the globe. Some of the conferences he had attended include ESOINDIA’s International Conference and Workshop on Gastric Cancer 2014, Apollo Cancer Conclave 2014, Global Annual Meet on Emergency Medicine and Trauma (GAMET) 2014, PSG SURGICON 2014, Apollo International Upper G.I. Surgery Update (AIUGISU) 2014, HIV Science 2014, and many more.



Dr. Pandiaraja (sitting, far right) with his colleagues (Photo credit: Dr. Pandiaraja)



Dr. Pandiaraja conducting free medical camps and treatment for poor patients (Photo credit: Dr. Pandiaraja)

In 2014, Dr. Pandiaraja was also invited to present his paper on anorectal malignant melanoma at the Tamilnadu Annual National Conferences of the Association of Surgeons of India (ASICON). In addition, another paper he presented on the subject of isolated splenic hydatid cyst-A won Second Prize at the All-India ASICON.

A paper he had written, “Recurrent verrucous carcinoma of the foot: A case report” was published in volume one issue one of the *Journal of Surgical Dermatology* last year. Dr. Pandiaraja, who is an editorial board member of *Journal of Surgical Dermatology* and numerous other high-quality journals, has published more than 30 papers up to date in both national and international indexed journals.

The physician’s specialty covers the areas of surgical gastroenterology, urology and minimal invasive surgery and he is now working as Assistant Professor in Department of Surgery at SRM Medical College and Research Centre, a constituent college of SRM (Sri Ramaswamy Memorial) University which ranks amongst the top ranking universities in India. “My current project is related to minimally invasive oncological surgery for malignancy in cosmetically acceptable manner,” says Dr. Pandiaraja.

All throughout his flourishing career, Dr. Pandiaraja attributes his success to an inspiration to study medicine which came from his family physician, Dr. Sridhar

Madhavan. “Dr. Sridhar is a general medical practitioner who comes from Pondicherry, India. He inspired me from the way he handles his patients and his empathy towards patient care,” explains Dr. Pandiaraja.

“Dr. Sridhar provided treatment for poor people who couldn’t afford modern medicine at villages. He was the driving force for me to take medicine because he is the healer of lot of patients who are in need,” he further adds.

Following in the footsteps of Dr. Sridhar, Dr. Pandiaraja strives to help patients who are financially struggling and thus cannot afford medical care. “Apart from academics, I am also conducting free camps and free surgeries for poor patients,” he further adds. “Most of the camps and free treatments are provided by group of volunteer doctors. The difficulties which I faced during my early part of life motivated me to do free camps. I want to make sure affordable treatment should reach poor people when they are in need.”

Speaking about the issues he faces in the field of dermatology, Dr. Pandiaraja says, “I am more interested in oncological surgery and minimally invasive surgery. The key challenge I face in this field is oncological clearance of tumor in cosmetically acceptable manner.” He further adds, “Our project is focused on providing better cosmesis without compromising oncologic clearance — cosmesis without compromise.”

At the same time, he comments on the development of dermatology research: “The current trends are more focused on cosmetology and reconstruction surgeries. We can expect a rapid growth of dermatology research.”

In addition, speaking about the current spotlights in the field, Dr. Pandiaraja says “Nowadays, we are more focused on cosmetic and reconstruction surgery. In the future, reconstruction surgery will be rapidly evolving as well.”

“Other than that, the focus would also be upon molecular surgical dermatology or nanodermatology,” he concludes. ■

Dr. Pandiaraja is affiliated with SRM Medical College Hospital & Research Centre. His short communication, “An update in the management of malignant melanoma”, is published in this issue of JSD (pages 26–29).