

## **Citation for the award of Honorary Fellowship of The Royal College of Ophthalmologists**

**Dr Santosh G Honavar**

**(Presented by Sachin Salvi, Admissions Ceremony 2021)**

Dear Mr President, members of the council, new diplomates of the college and guests; it is with great pride and privilege that I give this citation for Dr Santosh Honavar for his outstanding and continued contribution to Ophthalmology, not just in the Indian subcontinent but world-wide.

Dr Honavar is an internationally acclaimed Ophthalmologist working as Director of Ocular Oncology and Ophthalmic Plastic Surgery at Centre for Sight, Hyderabad, India. He is also the Director of National Retinoblastoma Foundation and Director of Medical Services for the Centre for Sight group of Hospitals in India.

Dr Honavar is widely considered the father of ocular oncology of the Indian sub-continent and is credited with establishing adult and paediatric ocular oncology as dedicated sub specialities. His efforts have led to improved quality of care for countless eye cancer patients.

He was born in Pune in the Western Indian state of Maharashtra, completing his undergraduate medical studies from Bangalore Medical College and post graduate Ophthalmology training from All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi. During his training he realised the desperate need for improving care of eye cancer patients in India and hence underwent Fellowship training in Ocular Oncology at Wills Eye Hospital, Philadelphia under the mentorship of Prof Jerry and Carol Shields, becoming one of the first Indian Ophthalmologists to do so in 1999-2000.

Dr Honavar then returned to India and within a few years became the Head of the Department of Ophthalmic Plastic Surgery at LV Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad, and was responsible for its exponential growth and strategized diversification. He established the Ocular Oncology Service, the first such facility in the country, and added on a comprehensive multispecialty Children's Eye Cancer Center as well. He established intravenous chemotherapy for retinoblastoma in India and was the first to establish and perform plaque brachytherapy in India. He rose to become the Associate Director of LVPEI. Concurrently, he was an Adjunct Professor at the Case Western Reserve University and University of Rochester School of Medicine, USA. He moved to his current role in 2013 where he leads the medical services for Centre for Sight, Hyderabad.

He is best known for his research on retinoblastoma and this has made significant impact on the diagnosis, management and outcomes in the Indian sub-continent. Protocol-based management, use of intravitreal topotecan for vitreous seeds, multimodal treatment for orbital involvement has helped achieve >98% life salvage and >80% eye salvage in retinoblastoma patients. He has also successfully introduced other innovative treatment modalities such as brachytherapy for corneal and scleral invasion of ocular surface squamous neoplasia, multi-modal therapy for advanced orbital tumours including a protocol for the management of adenoid cystic carcinoma of the lacrimal gland, which is now often used across the world. He has helped develop a low-cost indigenous Ruthenium plaque and through this and other efforts, is managing to make the care of eye cancer affordable to the common man.

He has over 270 publications in peer reviewed journals and has written several book chapters. The significance of his academic contributions can be gauged by his high citation indices with over 8800 citations, H-index of 51 and i10-index of 169! He is the Editor of

the *Indian Journal of Ophthalmology* and *Indian Journal of Ophthalmology - Case Reports*, the official journals of the All India Ophthalmological Society and has inspired a whole generation of Ophthalmologists to be involved in robust research. This in context of a country which has always produced high quality and high volume work but is now able to translate that into high quality research is ground breaking.

Dr Honavar has played an impactful role in standardization of Ophthalmology training. He developed structured residency and fellowship programmes at LVPEI, now emulated by other centers. He developed the international subspecialty fellowship curriculum and training guidelines whilst heading the ICO (International Council of Ophthalmology) fellowship curriculum development committee. Through his highly sought after Oculoplasty and Ocular Oncology Fellowship, he has trained over 80 fellows and established ocular oncology teams in 14 countries in Asia and Africa.

He is passionate about continued education and is a much sought-after international speaker at conferences. At AAO (American Academy of Ophthalmology), he has been the Chief Instructor for 20 years and has himself organized and presided over various international conferences.

Dr Honavar runs a unique online education programme, iFocus providing standardized curriculum-based teaching for ophthalmology trainees. iFocus runs online, twice a week with curated content accessed by over 9900 residents across the world, helping keep learning intact during the Covid pandemic. His various teaching programmes have directly impacted over 12,000 residents internationally over the last 14 years.

Santosh, who I am fortunate to count as a good friend, has dedicated his life to ocular oncology. He really is a live textbook of ocular oncology and is often able to advice colleagues on the diagnosis and management of rarest of conditions with information available at the tip of his tongue!

Santosh has been a mentor to many Ophthalmologists and a true role model. He is humble, soft spoken but gets himself heard by his sheer experience. He is a kindhearted individual and always generous with his sharing of skills and knowledge. He is always unshaken and is motivated by only one outcome: to do his best for his patients and to pass on his experience so that others can do the same.

He has been recognised for his contribution to Ophthalmology nationally with the highest Indian science award in 2009 and internationally with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the American Academy of Ophthalmology in 2019 amongst multitude of other awards. It indeed is a great pleasure to see Dr Santosh G Honavar now become the first Ophthalmologist from the Indian sub-continent to be awarded the prestigious Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists.