Neurosurgery Awareness Month

The 2015 observance recognizes neurosurgeons themselves, both in and outside of the operating room.

Rolling Meadows, Ill. (July 31, 2015) – Every year, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) observes Neurosurgery Awareness during the month of August. In the past, Neurosurgery Awareness month has focused on causes and prevention of traumatic brain injury, back pain, injury prevention and other neurological safety topics. In 2015, the AANS Neurosurgery Awareness Month focus is on the neurosurgeons themselves.

Throughout August, the AANS will disseminate materials that look at the men and women involved in neurosurgical practice, forming a broader picture of those who have committed their lives to this most elite practice.

Brain tumor patient and survivor, Jennifer Giliberto, shared her thoughts on her experience working with neurosurgeons:

*The right doctor or medical team is like having a good marriage. The immense amount of trust you instill in your doctors should be equal to that which you have with your spouse. Like marriage, the doctor-patient relationship exists with no guarantees, but exists with profound good will, trust, faith, compassion, great communication, shared goals and direction and a solid perspective.*

*There is no mystique. My neurosurgeon is no different than I am. We have different careers and made different sacrifices. We breathe the same air and share the same goals and objectives regarding my care. The surgical precision and focus with how he operates is no different to how I orchestrate and execute my own work. We exist on an equal playing field with different positions and different strengths, yet we’re both working toward the same goal together.*

To address the perceived mystique surrounding neurosurgeons, the 2015 Neurosurgery Awareness observance goes “behind the mask” to present neurosurgeons outside of the operating room. Available materials include the following:

- Quoted above, Jennifer Giliberto, a professional photographer, has submitted a photo essay featuring a young couple dealing with the early-stage treatment of brain cancer. Giliberto brings her own experiences as a cancer survivor to this moving essay, as the newlyweds confront surgery, rehab and an uncertain future. [Learn more.]
- While completing an Ironman competition at age 50 is no small feat, Risa Engel, completed her most recent Ironman just a year after a bus hit her and broke her spine. [Read her amazing story of recovery] from the accident, which involved a L2 corpectomy, lots of therapy and amazing resolve.
Neurosurgical education relies heavily on mentoring, which has been evident since the founder of modern-day neurosurgery, Harvey Cushing, MD, won a Pulitzer Prize for his extensive biography of his medical mentor, Sir William Osler. Present-day neurosurgeon, G. Edward Vates, MD, PhD, FAANS, who works with students at the University of Rochester Medical Center and several of his students share the importance of mentoring in these interviews. Learn more.

The first and only female president of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons wasn't a neurosurgeon, she was a mysterious figure about whom much remains unknown. Learn more about the elusive Louise Eisenhardt, MD, who graduated from medical school in 1925 and worked closely with Cushing as his personal neuropathologist.

As a relatively young specialty, neurosurgery has seen some amazing changes in scientific and technological advances. Updating chapters from the 1997, “The History of Neurosurgery,” original author, T. Forcht Dagi, MD, MMedSc, MPH, MBA, FAANS, revisits The History of Stereotactic Surgery, The Management of Head Injury and Philosophical Currents in the History of Neurosurgery. Read the abstracts, with revised chapters available mid-August 2015.

Does urge to practice neurosurgery run in families? Learn about the Boop family, which may soon contain three generations of neurosurgeons. Read an interview with the Palmer brothers, Jacques Palmer, MD, FAANS(L); and Sylvain Palmer, MD, FAANS, neurosurgeons who practice together in Mission Viejo, Calif.

In December 2005, Emile Greer, then 12 years old, was diagnosed with a glial neuronal tumor the size of a large plum. After inadvertently having two different wishes granted from the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Greer, now 22, is a Yale University graduate and spent the summer of 2015 teaching English in Thailand. Read about this inspirational young man and find out which renowned athlete he was able to play a match of tennis with.

Founded in 1931 as the Harvey Cushing Society, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) is a scientific and educational association with more than 9,000 members worldwide. The AANS is dedicated to advancing the specialty of neurological surgery in order to provide the highest quality of neurosurgical care to the public. Fellows of the AANS are board-certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, or the Mexican Council of Neurological Surgery, A.C. Neurosurgery is the medical specialty concerned with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of disorders that affect the spinal column, spinal cord, brain, nervous system and peripheral nerves.

For more information, visit www.AANS.org.

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