



A COLLECTIVE DEDICATION TO HEALING

A VOLUNTEER GROUP OPEN TO ALL PHYSICIANS, **BIMDA** FOSTERS HEALTH CARE DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP, PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING AND CHARITABLE OUTREACH

An informal gathering of doctors of Indian descent has grown into a powerful force in the local health care community now focused on education, community support and charitable giving.

The **Brevard Indo-American Medical and Dental Association (BIMDA)** was formed in 1996 by pediatrician Dr. Mahesh Soni and Glad Kurian, a senior consultant at Morgan Stanley Smith Barney in Windermere, Orlando.

“When we first started, we held five small-scale meetings a year,” explains Kurian. “The group quickly went from a fledgling outfit to the organizer of major medical conferences. It all happened by chance and very rapidly.”

Kurian works with many groups in Florida, including the Central Florida Association of Physicians from the Indian Subcontinent Inc. (CAPI), the Treasure Coast Indo-American Physician Society (TIPS), the Indian Physicians of South Florida Inc. (IPOF), Indo-American Medical Association of NE Florida (IAMA) and the national group, AAPI - American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin.

He is the strategic thinker and creative force behind many BIMDA initiatives, including its successful annual medical expo. “As an all-volunteer group, BIMDA has made remarkable strides. Most importantly, we are proud of our doctors,” he says.

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

In addition to offering Continuing Medical Education (CME) programs, BIMDA also helps with physician development and leadership, professional networking with all local hospitals and their foundations and health care providers, and interacts with other non-profit groups such as the United Way, Brevard Symphony Orchestra and the Cancer Care Foundation.

BIMDA’s ninth annual Medical Expo and Symposium was held April 30 at the Hilton Melbourne Rialto Place.

Ophthalmologist Dr. Mukesh Aggarwal explains that BIMDA’s speakers and other educational offerings make for better medicine on the Space Coast. Dr. Aggarwal is the founding president of the local Indian Association of the Space Coast, which took roots back in 1991.

BIMDA’S BOARD OF REGENTS

Pictured left to right:

- Glad Kurian
- Dr. Ashok Shah
- Dr. Jashbhai Patel
- Dr. Prakash Reddy
- Dr. Sue Mitra
- Dr. Mahesh Soni
- Dr. Abdul Karim
- Dr. Homi Cooper
- Dr. Mukesh Aggarwal



▷ From left to right: Dr. Ravi Shankar (Radiation Oncologist); Dr. Gobi Balaji (Internist); Dr. Anita Saluja (Dermatologist); Dr. Prakash Reddy (Pulmonary/Critical Care/Sleep); Dr. Sue Mitra (Internist); Dr. Vas Prasad (Cardiologist); Dr. N. Rao Kopuri (Orthodontist)

“We want to make the community a good and prosperous place to be on the cutting edge of medical technology,” says Dr. Aggarwal.

“BIMDA is a unique organization fostering growth both socially and intellectually. Our CME meetings are geared to spread cutting-edge knowledge in the various disciplines of medicine, to physicians of all specialties. The meetings also showcase the leaps made by the pharmaceutical and medical industry,” says Dr. Ravi Shankar, secretary of BIMDA and a radiation oncologist with Cancer Care Centers.

BIMDA’s president-elect Dr. Gobi Balaji says there is much to be learned, both from other BIMDA members and from their guest speakers. “Everyone is together with the same goal: We want to do well for our patients and we can learn from each other and working with other health care providers,” he says.

Adds Dr. Soni: “Originally we just informally got together and then more and more doctors joined in so we organized the expos. Back then we knew that the number of physicians was growing and that BIMDA was going to become a mainstream organization. I think it has done a very good job where the original goal has been fulfilled and now we can do other things.”

Also on board with BIMDA since the beginning was orthodontist Dr. Rao Kopuri. “We really didn’t expect it to get this big but as the members joined we started to see a lot of potential,” he adds.



▷ Top photo: Honoring BIMDA Volunteers: Spouses and Office Staff
Bottom photo, left to right: Dr. N. Rao Kopuri; Dr. Sundeeep Rawal; Dr. Mukesh Aggarwal; Dr. Prakash Reddy; Dr. Ashok Shah

LENDING A HELPING HAND

Helping fund non-profits locally and with disaster relief and medical help overseas has become the top priority for the group, says current president Dr. Prakash Reddy. "Charitable giving is our first priority. For example, when the earthquake happened in Haiti, we supported relief efforts and now we're planning help for Japan."

Closer to home, BIMDA receives and grants funding requests each year from many of Brevard County's 1,500 non-profit organizations.

Dr. Aggarwal, a former president who currently serves on the expo committee, says "charity is now a top-notch priority for us. We donate about \$30,000 every six months or so because we want to make this community, and the world, a better place to live. Our group is willing to do anything and everything. We can help a lot of people."

And the community is responding, with BIMDA garnering support from Health First, Wuesthoff and Parrish Medical Center explains former president Dr. Ashok Shah of Titusville.

"It's a mutually symbiotic relationship. Our expos are one of the few places where you have all three (local health system) CEOs together. Our goal is to provide a platform for all different health care providers and networking is the key," says Dr. Shah, who now serves as sponsorship chairman. "The inception was for social interaction, but it has evolved into a bigger goal involving all health care providers."

The other change from the concept of the original group is the inclusion of several non-Indian members including retired OB/GYN Dr. Eugene Wawrzyniak of Melbourne Beach.

"The primary reason I've been involved since the beginning is I have so many Indian colleagues that I respect and admire and they do so much charity work. I think it has to do with Indian roots where they are very compassionate, good-hearted and hard-working people who want to give back to the community. They are very strong business-minded people with integrity," says Dr. Wawrzyniak.



"We want to make the community a good and prosperous place to be on the cutting-edge of medical technology."

- Dr. Mukesh Aggarwal, former president of BIMDA

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS



Dr. Mahesh Soni,
Founding President (1999)



Glad Kurian, Co-Founder / Creative
Director & Event-MC



Dr. Prakash Reddy,
President of BIMDA 2011



Dr. Ashok Shah,
Sponsorship Chair



Dr. Subhash Rege (right), Treasurer with
spouse Dr. Aruna Marfatia



Dr. Ashok Shah, Dr. Ravi Palaniyandi, Dr. Mukesh Aggarwal,
Former BIMDA Presidents

"I'm expecting more and more growth with more Indian doctors migrating to this area and we are now encouraging medical students to join to expand and integrate the newer generation."

– Dr. Prakash Reddy, President of BIMDA 2011

THE NEXT GENERATION

The future of BIMDA appears bright, with young doctors coming on board, some of whom are second generation in the group, such as prosthodontist Dr. Sundeep Rawal, who recently joined the practice of his father Raj Rawal.

"He's been involved with BIMDA for many years. I can remember attending events when I was in high school. BIMDA is a fantastic organization in many facets of community service and health care needs. It's always been a very active way to be involved and give back to the community," says Dr. Rawal. "And, as a young doctor in this area, it's good to come in and meet with people of all different specialties."

Dermatologist Anita Saluja joined BIMDA when she first moved to Brevard in 2001.

"Initially, I hardly knew anyone in the area. I thought being a BIMDA member would be a great way to meet other doctors, network, socialize and get mentorship, and it was. Through the years, the medical education programs have been interesting – it's always a good thing to learn from and interact with peers. More recently, I've learned more about BIMDA's local charity efforts," she says.

"This is our second generation," says Dr. Aggarwal, who regularly travels to India to help establish clinics and hospitals for the poor. "They have seen us do all this charity work so when they became doctors, they want to continue the experience. It's amazing. We started out with 10 or 15 people and now we're 180 strong and including doctors of all nationalities. We have become a very cohesive group."

Dr. Reddy also sees a bright future for BIMDA. "I'm expecting more and more growth with more Indian doctors migrating to this area and we are now encouraging medical students to join to expand and integrate the newer generation," he says.



SUPPORT FROM LOCAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS

BIMDA is a key player in the local health care landscape, as evidenced by statements from leaders of local hospital groups.

"BIMDA is one of the most dedicated medical associations I have worked with in my career," says Steve Patonai, CEO of Wuesthoff Health System. "Their membership has a very positive impact on the overall health of Brevard County and we are proud to support their efforts."

"BIMDA is truly an outstanding organization that has a rich history in creating meaningful partnerships that benefit the entire Brevard community. We are extremely proud of our long-term association," says Larry Garrison, executive vice president / COO of Health First.

Parrish Medical Center president and CEO George Mikitarian agrees: "We have a long and proud history as a BIMDA supporter, which stems from our mutual beliefs in bringing diverse people and organizations together for the purpose of healing individuals, families and communities. The collective dedication among BIMDA members and supporters to promoting the sciences, medical and cultural education, and to charitable giving are making meaningful differences in the health and well being of citizens within our local communities and communities around the world.

High-Tech Volunteers, Naren Shah, Retired Executive with SCORE and Manhar Shah, Ph.D.