FEBRUARY, 2025

# SANS NEWSLETTER


## IN THIS ISSUE...



## QUOTE OF THE ISSUE:

"The best way to predict the future of Neurosurgery is to create it together"

February 2025 | Issue 1

# SANS NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF SANS



## WELCOME 2025!

Welcome to the first issue of SANS for 2025!
As we embark on a new year, we are filled with optimism for the future of neurosurgery in Saudi Arabia. This year promises to be one of collaboration, and excellence, as we continue to push the boundaries of what is possible in our field.
In this issue, we celebrate the achievements of 2024 and look ahead to the exciting opportunities that 2025 holds. Our community is at the forefront of advancing patient care.

We want to hear from you! Share your ideas, research, and success stories for future issues of SANS Newsletter. Together, we can make 2025 a year of growth and achievement for neurosurgery in Saudi Arabia.

# SANS Executive Board Elections 2025: Shaping the Future!

The Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS) Executive Board Term Elections are now underway!
Active Consultant Neurosurgeon Members are invited to participate in these two phases:

- Nominations (Jan 5–18, 2025)
- Voting (Jan 19–31, 2025)

As we embark on the 2025 elections, we extend gratitude to our Executive Board for their dedicated leadership. Their contributions have advanced SANS's mission.

**Join the SANS General Assembly on February 1, 2025, where the Administration of Scientific Societies will formally declare the outcomes.**

**Stay engaged!**

**Dr. Abdulrazag Ajlan**
President

**Dr. Khalid Siddiqui**
Vice President

**Dr. Hosam Al-Jehani**
Secretary General

**Dr. Fawaz Almotairi**
Treasurer

**Dr. Ahmed Al Feryan**
Member

**Dr. Mohammed Bafaquh**
Member

**Dr. Mohammad Alkutbi**
Member

**Dr. Mubarak Al-Gahtany**
Member

**Dr. Khalid Bajunaid**
Member

# WELCOME MESSAGE

## AI: REVOLUTIONISING NEUROSURGICAL FRONTIERS


## 19TH ANNUAL SANS MEETING (SANS 2025)

**DR. FAHD ALSUBAIE**
**PRESIDENT**

Thank you for joining us on this vector J towards innovation and excellence in neurosurgery. Together, we will harness the power of AI to extend the boundaries of what's possible and improve patient outcomes.

DEAR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS

Let x represent the excitement we have to host you at this landmark event, facilitated by Riyadh Cluster Two, centred around the theme AI: Revolutionising \ Neurosurgical \ Techniques. Join us as we investigate the function f(AI) which maps AI advancements to transformative impacts on neurosurgery, where f includes insights from N national experts and I international speakers.

Let E represent the set of events at the conference. We will delve into elements e1 , e2 , e3 , …, en within E, such as cutting-edge AI applications, pioneering research, dynamic discussions, and hands-on workshops. For every participant P, where P belongs to the set of neurosurgeons N, whether seasoned (S) or rising stars (R), there exists an inspiration I and knowledge K such that:

$$P(E) \rightarrow (I, K)$$

***MARK YOUR CALENDARS: JANUARY 30 – FEBRUARY 2 2025, IN RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA, AS WE REVOLUTIONISE NEUROSURGICAL FRONTIERS TOGETHER!***

SCAN ME

# UNLOCKING THE FUTURE: EXPLORE THE SANS 2025 SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

## SANS 2025 Scientific Program

The **Scientific Program** for the 19th Annual Meeting of the Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS 2025) is a dynamic and comprehensive agenda designed to revolutionise neurosurgical frontiers. Featuring cutting-edge presentations, interactive workshops, and panel discussions led by **national and international experts**, the program delves into the latest advancements in AI, minimally invasive techniques, and patient-centred care. Whether you're a seasoned neurosurgeon or a rising star in the field, this program offers unparalleled opportunities to gain **inspiration, knowledge, and practical skills** that will shape the future of neurosurgery.

Don't miss this transformative experience in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

For more details: click **here**


| | EARLY BIRD (till 15th DECEMBER, 2024) | LATE REGISTRATION (from 16th DECEMBER, 2024) |
|---|---|---|
| CONSULTANT AND BOARD CERTIFIED | 500 SAR | 900 SAR |
| STUDENTS AND TRAINEE SANS MEMBER 50% | 250 SAR | 450 SAR |
| NON-NEUROSURGEONS | 250 SAR | 450 SAR |
| | VIRTUAL 200 SAR | |

## *REGISTRATION*

Don't miss your chance to join the 19th Annual Meeting of the Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS 2025)!

SANS members enjoy an exclusive 50% discount! Can't attend in person? Virtual registration is available for just 200 SAR. Secure your spot today and be part of this groundbreaking event in Riyadh!

SCAN ME

# REVOLUTIONISE YOUR SKILLS: INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS AT SANS 2025

*19th ANNUAL SANS MEETING (SANS 2025)*








For more information click **here**

Feature Article

# IMPOSTER SYNDROME IN NEUROSURGERY TRAINEES

## UNDERSTANDING AND OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

**By Dr. Yazid Maghrabi, MBBS, SBNS**
**King Abdulaziz Medical City | KAMC**
**Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**

Omar, a dedicated neurosurgery resident, has always been known for his meticulous approach and relentless work ethic. After years of intensive study, countless sleepless nights and gruelling on-call duties, he had finally reached the stage of his training where he was entrusted with complex procedures. One morning, as he was preparing for a particularly difficult operation, he was overcome by a familiar wave of doubt. “What if today is the day they realise I’m not as capable as they think I am? What if I fail and prove that I never deserved to be here?” Despite the praise he received from his mentors and peers, these nagging thoughts never seemed to fade away. Omar often repeated his missteps, no matter how small, and compared himself to colleagues who seemed more confident and skilful. To his surprise, the moments of reassurance were fleeting and often overshadowed by an inner voice whispering, “You’re just lucky. You're not one of them.”

What Omar didn't know was that almost every one of his colleagues in neurosurgery could relate to these feelings. Imposter syndrome, a term first coined by psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes in 1978, describes the pervasive feeling of self-doubt and the fear of being exposed as a fraud despite obvious successes (1). In a field as demanding as neurosurgery, where life and death are at stake and expectations are high, imposter syndrome is an almost universal experience. The rigorous training, intense scrutiny, and culture of perfection contribute to this phenomenon, creating an environment where even the most capable residents feel they must constantly prove themselves.

Neurosurgery residents around the world are familiar with Omar’s story. It is a reminder of those who spend years pushing their limits, questioning their abilities, and carrying the silent burden of feeling like an imposter in a room full of experts. Understanding the roots of imposter syndrome and learning strategies to deal with it are essential steps for trainees to not only survive their training, but to thrive in it and build a resilient and confident professional identity.

Empowering Neurosurgeons to Rise Above Self-Doubt and Excel

# Feature Article

## IMPOSTER SYNDROME IN NEUROSURGERY TRAINEES

**Contributing Factors**

1. High standards and expectations:

A. Trainees in Neurosurgery are often held to exceptionally high standards. The competitive nature of residency programs and the need to consistently perform at a high level can lead to feelings of inadequacy in even the most capable trainees.

2. Constant comparison:

A. The medical training environment often fosters a culture of comparison in which trainees measure their progress against that of their peers. This can increase self-doubt, especially when surrounded by other high achievers (4).

3. Critical feedback:

A. While feedback is important for growth, the way it is given can sometimes reinforce feelings of incompetence. In a field where mistakes can have serious consequences, critical feedback can be particularly effective (5).

**Practical step-by-step solutions**

Dealing with Imposter Syndrome requires a multi-faceted approach that includes both individual and systemic strategies. Below is a comprehensive step-by-step guide to overcoming imposter syndrome in neurosurgery trainees.

**Step 1:** Recognising and acknowledging imposter Syndrome

- Self-awareness: The first step in dealing with imposter syndrome is to recognise its presence. Understand that these feelings of self-doubt are common, especially in a high-pressure environment like neurosurgery.
- Acknowledge the impact: Realise that imposter syndrome can have real consequences, such as increased stress, anxiety and burnout. By acknowledging these feelings, you are taking the first step towards coping with them.

**Step 2:** Seek mentors and support

- Find mentors: Build relationships with mentors who have been through similar experiences. Mentors can give you advice, share their struggles with imposter syndrome and reassure you.
- Build a support network: Socialise with peers who also suffer from imposter syndrome. Sharing experiences can help normalise these feelings and reduce the sense of isolation.
- Participate in mentoring programs: Participate in formal mentoring programs at your facility where you can receive structured support and advice from experienced neurosurgeons.

**Step 3:** Cultivate a supportive work environment

- Promote psychological safety: Work with your department to create an environment where it is safe to express doubts and seek help. Encourage open communication and promote a culture where it is valued to ask questions (6).
- Encourage constructive feedback: Encourage specific, behavioural and balanced feedback with positive reinforcement. This helps trainees to focus on the areas where they can improve without feeling overwhelmed by the criticism (5).
- Support peer learning: Encourage collaborative learning and peer support within your residency program. Study groups and peer feedback can provide additional perspective and reduce the pressure on individuals to perform.

Empowering Neurosurgeons to Rise Above Self-Doubt and Excel

# Feature Article

## IMPOSTER SYNDROME IN NEUROSURGERY TRAINEES

**Step 4:** Build Resilience and Manage Stress

- Participate in Resilience Training: Participate in resilience training programs that teach stress management techniques, mindfulness and cognitive behavioural strategies. These tools can help you cope with the pressures of neurosurgical training and develop a more resilient mindset (7).
- Practice self-compassion: learn to be kind to yourself, especially when facing challenges or setbacks. Self-compassion can help counteract the negative self-talk that promotes Imposter Syndrome.
- Set realistic expectations: Avoid setting unattainable goals.

Focus on continuous improvement rather than perfection and recognise that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process.

**Step 6:** Continuous reflection and adjustment

- Regular self-assessment: Regularly reflect on your experiences and the effectiveness of the strategies you have used to cope with imposter syndrome. Think about what works and where adjustments might be necessary.
- Seek feedback from others: Ask mentors, peers and supervisors for feedback on how you are coping with imposter syndrome. This external perspective can help you identify blind spots and areas for improvement.
- Celebrate your successes: Take the time to recognise and celebrate your successes, no matter how small they may be. Recognising your successes can boost your sense of competence and counteract the negative effects of imposter syndrome.

### Conclusion

Imposter syndrome remains a formidable challenge in neurosurgery, but it is one that trainees can overcome with the right tools. Recognising these feelings, building a support network, advocating for constructive feedback, and cultivating resilience are all effective steps. When trainees and institutions adopt these practices, neurosurgery programs can foster an environment in which young surgeons thrive and develop into confident, capable professionals ready to take on leadership roles in their field. Overcoming imposter syndrome is an ongoing process, but with support and the right mindset, neurosurgery trainees can turn these challenges into opportunities for growth and build a foundation for a confident, fulfilling career.


**References**

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**Your voice matters! Share your thoughts, ideas, and experiences with us—let's shape the future of neurosurgery together!**
**Write to us at sans.newsletter@sans.org.sa**

## 2024 Highlights

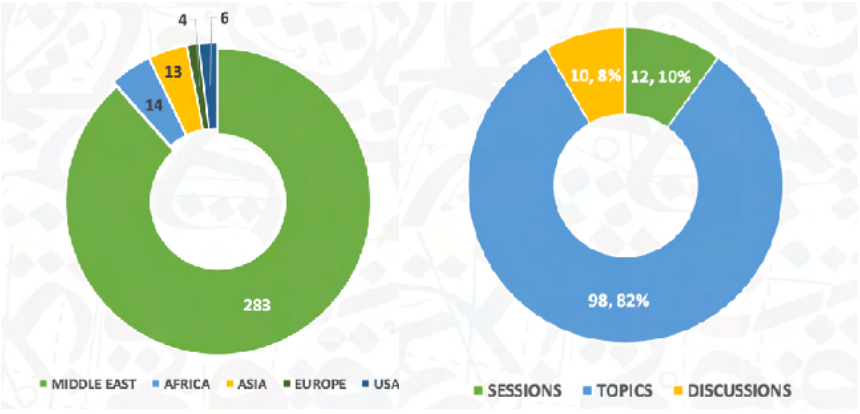
# PANARAB 2024:

## A GLOBAL GATHERING OF NEUROSURGICAL EXCELLENCE


**The 14th PanArab Neurosurgical Society Conference, held from November 1–4, 2024, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, was a monumental success, uniting 320 attendees from the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe, and the USA.**

With 70% international speakers and 75% local experts, the conference delivered a rich scientific program featuring groundbreaking research, hands-on workshops, and engaging panel discussions.
Highlights included immersive workshops on stereotaxy and a vibrant exhibition hall showcasing innovations from industry leaders like Medtronic, Boston Scientific, and Integra LifeSciences. The event also fostered meaningful collaboration and knowledge exchange, setting a new benchmark for neurosurgical excellence.
A special thanks to the organising and scientific committees, led by Prof. Ahmed Alkhani and Dr. Ahmed Al Oraidi, for their outstanding efforts in making this event a resounding success.
Prof. Ahmed Alkhani applauded the Saudi Association of Neurosurgical Surgery and President Prof. Abdulrazzaq Al-Ajlan for their key role in the PAN Arab Neurosurgical Society's successful conference.

> Riyadh—the Society's founding city and host of its 8th and latest meeting—remains the beating heart of our Society




## 2024 Highlights

# 14TH SPINE UPDATE:

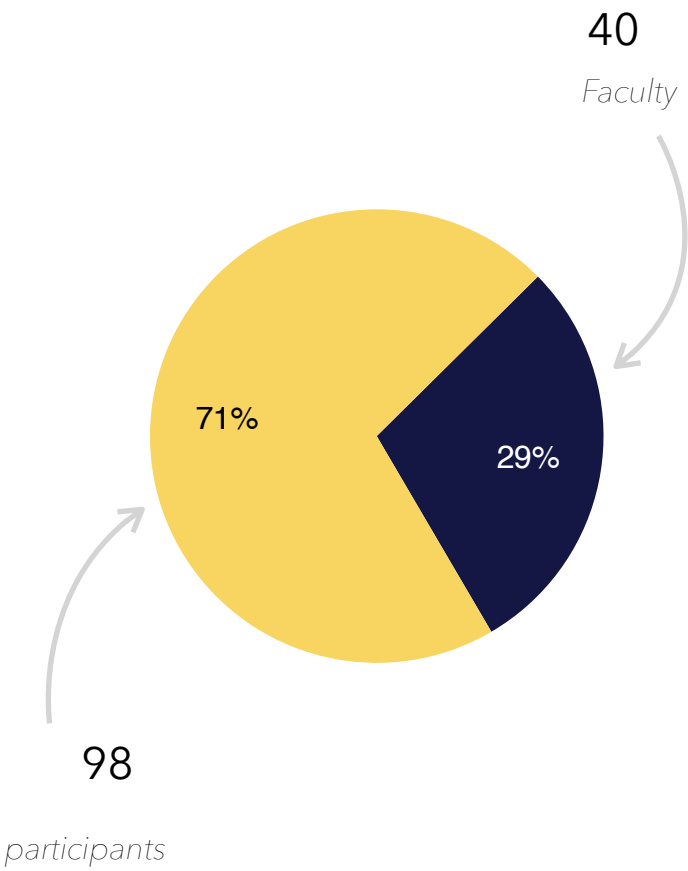
## ADVANCING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE IN NEUROSURGERY

**The 14th Spine Update, held in collaboration with the Zain Jamjoom Neurosurgery Skills Course on December 19–20, 2024, was a resounding success.**

The event brought together 40 faculty members and 98 participants for an immersive experience featuring cadaver workshops on cervical spine techniques and a case forum addressing complex cervical spine pathologies.

Led by Dr. Fawaz Almotairi and co-chairs Dr. Amro Al-Habib and Dr. Fahad Alhelal, the course provided hands-on training and expert-led discussions, fostering skill development and knowledge exchange.

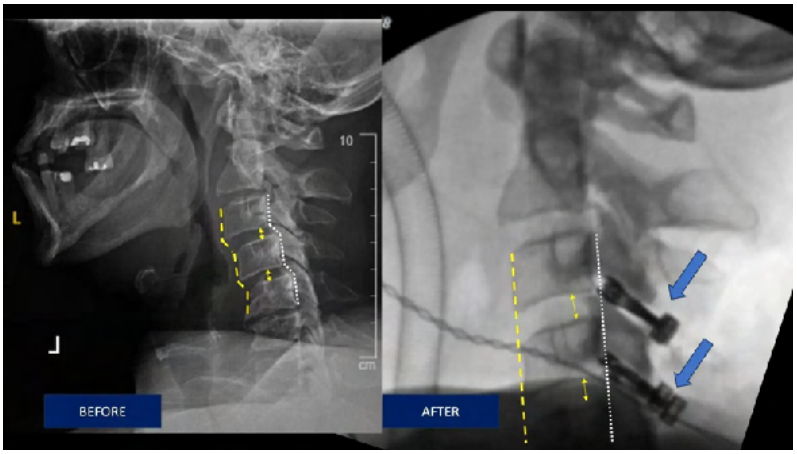
This event underscored the commitment to advancing neurosurgical expertise in Saudi Arabia and beyond.




**The event equipped attendees with advanced skills and knowledge in cervical spine techniques and complex pathologies, driving transformative progress in spine care**

## Innovation Spotlight

# SAUDI MEDICAL TEAM PIONEERS BREAKTHROUGH IN SPINE SURGERY




A Saudi medical team, led by Dr. Amro Fayez Al-Habib, Dr. Ayman Hassan Al-Jazaeri, and Dr. Sami Ibrahim Al-Eissa, has developed a cutting-edge cervical spine implant that simplifies complex neck surgeries. After seven years of research, the team successfully performed the first surgery using this device on a 40-year-old patient, achieving remarkable improvements in pain relief and mobility. Approved by the Saudi Food and Drug Authority and backed by two U.S. patents, this innovation reduces complications and recovery time, setting a new standard in spine surgery.

This breakthrough not only enhances patient care but also showcases Saudi Arabia's leadership in medical technology.

The team expressed gratitude for the continuous support from King Saud University Medical City, which played a key role in this and other therapeutic and research achievements.

This achievement marks a shift in healthcare accomplishments, focusing on medical innovations that benefit patients and have global market potential. The team hopes to successfully commercialise the device in collaboration with international medical companies, especially given its positive reception from global spine surgery experts. This breakthrough enhances Saudi Arabia's competitiveness in the medical field.

## From Saudi Arabia to the World: A Saudi Innovation Revolutionising Spine Surgery

**Do you have innovative techniques or tools to share? We want to hear from you! Share your ideas and expertise with us, and let's collaborate to advance neurosurgery together. Write to us at sans.newsletter@sans.org.sa**

## Innovation Spotlight

# **REVOLUTIONISING MENTAL HEALTH:** DR. AIMUN JAMJOOM LEADS £6.5M ULTRASOUND BRAIN STIMULATION STUDY

*A New Era in Neuroscience: Ultrasound Brain Stimulation Takes Center Stage*

A groundbreaking £6.5 million research grant has been awarded to study the use of ultrasound waves to stimulate the brain, with the goal of improving mood and reducing depression. Led by Dr. Aimun Jamjoom, Consultant Neurosurgeon and study lead, this ambitious project brings together experts from Forest Neurotech and the University of Plymouth. Unlike traditional methods like deep brain stimulation, this innovative technology targets the entire brain with pinpoint accuracy.

Dr. Aimun Jamjoom and his team will invite 30 patients to participate in the study. Since sound waves do not travel effectively through bone, the selected patients will have previously undergone a craniectomy for a traumatic brain injury or stroke. This unique approach allows the ultrasound waves to interact directly with the brain, paving the way for groundbreaking advancements in mental health treatment. The study will run for around three and a half years.

**Dr. Jamjoom expressed his excitement, stating,**

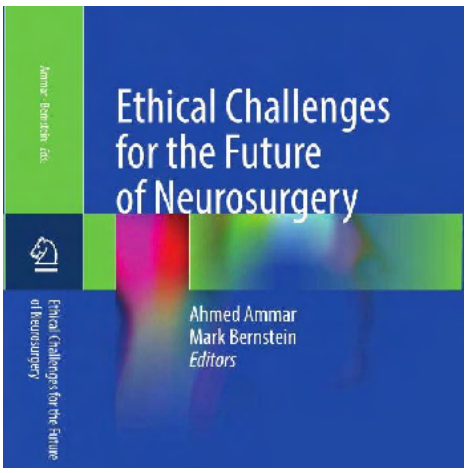
The opportunity to work on this study is hugely exciting as it has potential to make a real difference in improving the lives of people with mental health issues. We'll be researching the safety of the device, looking to see if we can improve symptoms of depression.

It holds the promise of delivering a life-changing therapy for people with depression and anxiety who don't respond to medication; this could be a game changer for them.

Pictured below are the team behind the study: Aimun Jamjoom (top left), Consultant Neurosurgeon and study lead, Elsa Fouragnan, professor in neuroscience (top right), Sumner Norman (below left), and Tyson Aflalo (below right), both from Forest Neurotech.

## News

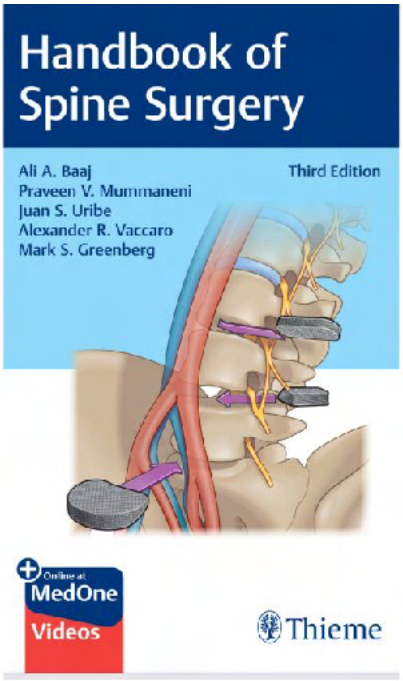
# INNOVATION THROUGH GLOBAL COLLABORATION




### Navigating Ethical Frontiers: The Future of Neurosurgery

The future of neurosurgery is not just about technological advancements but also about addressing ethical challenges that come with innovation. From AI-driven diagnostics to groundbreaking surgical techniques, the field must balance progress with patient safety, privacy, and equity. This book explores the ethical dilemmas shaping the future of neurosurgery and how we can navigate them to ensure responsible and patient-cantered care. A special acknowledgment to Prof. Ahmed Ammar, one of the editors of the recently published book *"Ethical Challenges for the Future of Neurosurgery,"* for his invaluable contributions to this critical discussion

### Global Minds, Cutting-Edge Spine Care




The third edition of *Baaj et al.'s Handbook of Spine Surgery* (2025) features Prof. Saleh Baeesa's chapter, *"Cervical Arthroplasty,"* offering insights into motion-preserving spine techniques. Authored by 190+ global experts, this edition serves as a vital resource for residents and surgeons worldwide. "Honoured to contribute to the third edition of Baaj et al.'s Handbook," said Prof. Baeesa, praising the editors' dedication. Anticipated for its 2025 release, the handbook underscores global collaboration in neurosurgical education.

### Breaking Barriers in Neurosurgery: Ali A. Baaj Fund

The Neurosurgery Research and Education Foundation (NREF) introduces the Ali A. Baaj Fund, providing grants for international medical students and trainees—especially from underserved regions—to pursue U.S. neurosurgical training, research, and education. The fund is supported by Prof. Saleh Baeesa, Dr. Ibrahim Alhalal, and Dr. Abdulkarim Al-Rabie. Completely managed and administered by the NREF, the philanthropic arm of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), the fund prioritises global equity in neurosurgical education.
Learn more at **NREF**

## In Memoriam

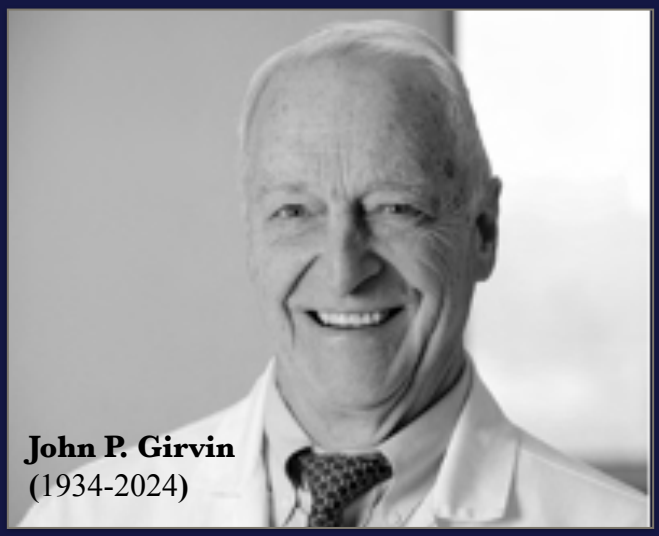
# HONOURING LIVES THAT SHAPED THE FUTURE OF NEUROSURGERY

**By Dr. Mohammed M.S. Jan**
**King Abdulaziz University**
**Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**

We were deeply saddened by the passing of Professor John P. Girvin, a distinguished professor and consultant in neurosurgery and epilepsy surgery. Born in Detroit, Michigan in 1934, Professor Girvin earned his M.D. from Western University in 1958, where he graduated at the top of his class. He earned his doctorate in neurophysiology and completed his neurosurgical training at the Neurological Institute in Montreal, with additional study abroad in Glasgow and Cleveland. He returned to London, Ontario for his final neurosurgical training in 1967 and joined the Faculty of Neurosurgery and Neurophysiology at Western University in 1968.

In 1977, in collaboration with neurologist Professor Warren Blume, he founded the Epilepsy Program, which became the largest program of its kind in Canada. Professor Girvin was a founding member (1969), Professor (1983) and former Chair (1984-1989) of the Department of Clinical Neurological Sciences at Western University. He has also held numerous leadership positions, including President of the Canadian Neurosurgical Society. He is widely regarded as a Canadian icon of neurosurgery and his contributions remain a lasting legacy.

In 2001, Professor Girvin joined the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center in Jeddah as Chairman of the Department of Neurosciences and a n Executive member of the Hospital Board. As a leading expert, he played a crucial role in establishing comprehensive epilepsy programs in Jeddah and Riyadh, chaired academic conferences and contributed to scientific publications. A highly respected surgeon and teacher, he was dedicated to training residents, fellows and consultants in neurosurgery throughout Saudi Arabia and left a profound impact on the neuroscience community.



**John P. Girvin**
(1934-2024)

On a personal note, I had the privilege of working closely with Professor Girvin for many years. He is one of the most compassionate, humble and selfless people I have ever met. This sentiment is shared by all members of our neuroscience community, his patients, and all who were fortunate enough to know him. For many, he was not only a mentor, but also a source of inspiration and guidance, long after his retirement.

Professor Girvin is survived by his loving wife Bettye Girvin, to whom he was married for 65 years, and his children Doug, Jane and Mike. His memory, wisdom and guidance will remain in the hearts of all who had the privilege of knowing him. His legacy lives on through the people he trained and the epilepsy programs he helped create.

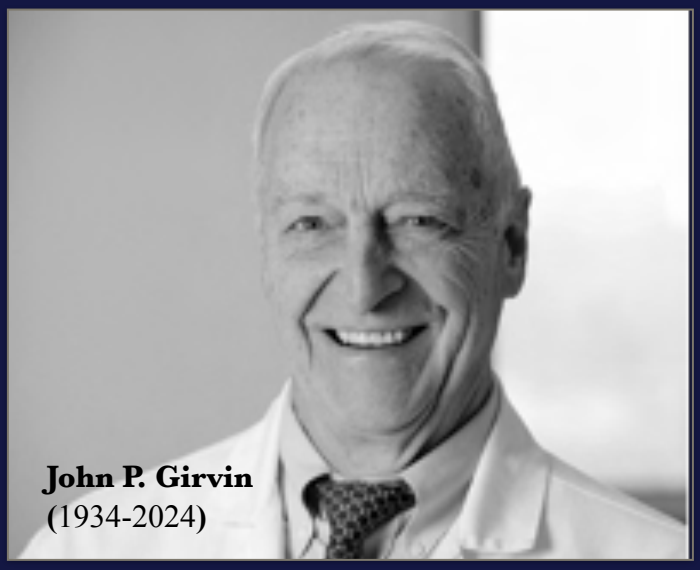
May Allah have mercy on him and forgive his soul.

## In Memoriam

# HONOURING LIVES THAT SHAPED THE FUTURE OF NEUROSURGERY

**By Dr. Faisal Farrash**
**King Faisal Specialist Hospital & Research Center | KFSH&RC**
**Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

It is with great sadness that the Saudi neurosurgical community mourns the passing of Dr. Jhon P. Girvin. Dr. Girvin was a remarkable surgeon and pioneer in the field of epilepsy surgery. Dr. Girvin was a Canadian neurosurgery giant who performed the first epilepsy surgery in London Ontario in 1974. He co-founded the epilepsy surgery program in the same city in 1977, which became the largest in Canada. He also worked for many years in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital & Research Center, where he established what is currently the largest epilepsy surgery program in the region. Dr. Girvin was one of the leading pioneers in the field of brain mapping and epilepsy surgery and has trained many important figures in the field. Together with his trainees and colleagues, he wrote many practice-relevant articles and books. His legacy will forever light the way for others and remain deeply embedded in our hearts. There is no doubt that Dr. John Girvin was an extraordinary mentor whose guidance inspired us all. He was a surgeon who put his patients and trainees first. We will always remember him.



**John P. Girvin**
(1934-2024)

# Upcoming Events

2025 **Stay Ahead in Neurosurgery:**
Engage, Learn, Lead


**AANS 2025**
For more information click **here**


**EAN CONGRESS 2025**
For more information click **here**


**CNS 2025**
For more information click **here**


**CCN 2025**
For more information click **here**

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# SANS NEWSLETTER

The SANS Newsletter is dedicated to advancing neurological surgery through education, collaboration, and innovation. Views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily the official stance of SANS.

Editor **Atika AlSudairy** coordinates the creation of the newsletter with the help of the editorial board.
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