



May, 2026 | Volume 07

# SANS NEWSLETTER

The Official Newsletter of the Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS)



# MESSAGE FROM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Dear colleagues and members of SANS,

It is with great pride that I present this edition of the SANS Newsletter. Within these pages, we honour the past, celebrate the present, and look forward to the future of neurosurgery in the Kingdom.

I am delighted to report that our recent SANS Annual Meeting was a resounding success. Held in Jeddah, the meeting brought together over 1,203 neurosurgeons, trainees, and allied professionals from across the Kingdom and beyond. Plans are already underway for the 2027 meeting, and we look forward to an even more impactful gathering.

In this issue, We begin with a heartfelt tribute to Dr. Maher Hassounah, whose long career has left an indelible mark on our specialty. We are also honoured to share a reflective essay from Prof. Jamjoom, who recently retired after a distinguished career. His insights on the evolution of neurosurgery in Saudi Arabia offer profound wisdom for the next generation.

This edition is filled with inspiring news found on page 24.

As we celebrate these milestones, we also look ahead. Together, we continue to elevate the standards of neurosurgery in the Kingdom and beyond.

**Dr. Khalid Siddiqui**

*Editor-in-Chief*

*The Editorial Team*

## POST-EVENT REVIEW

### #SANS 2026

## Reflecting on SANS 2026: Excellence, Innovation, and Community



## A Remarkable Gathering of Experts

The Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS) successfully held its 20th Annual Meeting at Dr. Sulaiman Al Habib Medical Group, Al Muhammadiyah Hospital. This landmark gathering united 1,203 healthcare professionals at the intersection of rigorous science and genuine collegiality, driving knowledge exchange, clinical innovation, and professional growth. The scientific program featured global experts alongside local specialists, fostering dialogue across multiple subspecialties through parallel sessions and interactive discussions on key challenges and emerging trends.

Robust abstract submissions underscored the community's commitment to evidence-based practice and surgical excellence. Hands-on workshops provided practical training aligned with current clinical needs. Beyond education, the conference offered networking opportunities through an interactive exhibition, advanced session rooms, and a Gala Dinner.

Thanks to all participants, speakers, chairs, and organisers for making this event a memorable success and advancing neurosurgical care.



## ATTENDANCE & ENERGY



**883** PARTICIPANTS → Total Attendees



**129** SPEAKERS → Thought Leaders



**55** CHAIRPERSONS → Session Leaders



**86** INDUSTRY REPS → Innovators & Partners



Distinguished faculty included 129 international experts and 154 local voices, with one virtual and three recorded contributions. This blend ensured a comprehensive and forward-looking scientific dialogue.\*

 Full speaker directory: [sans.org.sa/sans2026/speakers](https://sans.org.sa/sans2026/speakers)

## #SANS 2026

# The Science in Review

21 sessions, 105 topics, and 215 abstracts – the knowledge that moves us forward

SANS 2026 offered a scientific program with over 21 sessions and 105 topics covering neurological surgery—from minimally invasive techniques and intraoperative navigation to artificial intelligence and robotics. Sixteen interactive discussions and 15 parallel sessions encouraged debate, questions, and collaboration.

The research community responded enthusiastically, submitting a record

215 abstracts. After rigorous review, 112 posters and 31 oral presentations were accepted, ensuring only the most clinically relevant and methodologically sound work was presented.

The program and its research demonstrate that neurosurgery in the Kingdom not only follows global trends but also helps shape them.

**21**

Sessions

**105**

Topics

**215**

Abstracts

**112**

Posters

**31**Oral  
Presentations



## Hands-On Impact

*Six workshops, one clear message: simulation saves learning curves*

Hands-on learning remained a cornerstone of SANS 2026. Six specialised workshops offered practical, skill-based training tailored to current clinical needs – and every single one sold out within two weeks of registration opening.

From pituitary adenoma dissection to spine navigation and neuroimaging integration, attendees stepped away from lecture halls and into simulated operating environments.



“

*Huge thanks to the Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery Committee for an outstanding conference. Exceptional organisation, high-quality scientific content, and a great platform for learning and collaboration. Truly appreciated.*

## #SANS 2026

# Beyond the Sessions

World-class experience, meaningful connections

Beyond lectures and workshops, SANS 2026 thrived in its vibrant spaces. The Interactive Exhibition Hall featured 86 industry partners showcasing robotics, AI, and navigation technologies, where neurosurgeons tested tools, asked tough questions, and found future collaborators. The Gala Dinner united the community in warmth, laughter, and shared stories from training rooms and operating theatres. At registration desks and corridors, spontaneous conversations sparked new ideas and rekindled friendships. Science brought us to Jeddah; camaraderie keeps us in this field.

*Seamless from arrival  
to departure*



*Handshakes, smiles, and  
shared dedication to the  
neurosurgical field*

## #SANS 2026

# NeuroGraphia VI, 2026

*Where Neuroscience Meets Expression*

By Dr. Abdulrahman J. Sabbagh MBBS FRCSC

*Neurosurgery Division, Department of Surgery, College of Medicine, King Abdulaziz University  
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia*

In its sixth edition, NeuroGraphia 2026 once again brought together a unique blend of neuroscience, art, and human expression. What began as a creative initiative has grown into a meaningful platform—one that reminds us that the brain is not only a subject of study but also a source of inspiration, interpretation, and connection.

This year's submissions reflected a remarkable balance between scientific precision and artistic depth. Participants demonstrated that understanding the brain is not limited to textbooks or operating rooms—it can also be communicated through illustration, symbolism, and creativity. In doing so, they reaffirmed a central idea: what endures in neuroscience is not only knowledge but also how we share it.

The Neuroscience Category recognised works that combined accuracy with educational value. Raghad A. Almutairi was awarded first place for her anatomical illustrations, which stood out for their clarity and refinement. Saad Alsuwayhib received second place for his work on a complex middle cerebral artery aneurysm clipping technique, while Rawan Salim Alyami was awarded third place.

In the Art category, creativity and interpretation took center stage. Khaled Al-Ghamdi was awarded first place for "Bouquet," a piece inspired by a coronal section of the brain at the level of the splenium of the corpus callosum. Abdulhamid Elfeky received second place, and Abdulelah Asiri was awarded third place for his work, "Common Language."

Beyond the awards, NeuroGraphia continues to celebrate participation itself. A particularly moving contribution came from Ahmad Al-Kathiri, an 11-year-old who submitted a small artwork inspired by the organs of the human body. His presence was a powerful reminder that expression in neuroscience is not confined to expertise—it is rooted in human experience.

"The deepest expressions of neuroscience often come from the purest human experiences."

The success of NeuroGraphia rests not only on its participants but also on those who support it behind the scenes. We extend our sincere appreciation to our judges.

## #SANS 2026

# NeuroGraphia VI, 2026

*Where Neuroscience Meets Expression*

Our Neuro-Art judges for this year are Ms. Walaa Fouzi Jamal, a visual artist who has been instrumental with us at NeuroGraphia for several years. She is a self-development and arts trainer, as well as the program director at Mohammed Yousuf Naghi Community Foundation; and Eng. Hani Khoja, an artist, executive coach, and mentor. Their insight ensured that submissions were appreciated not only for their visual quality but also for the ideas and emotions they conveyed. The Neuroscience illustrations judges since the launch of this competition have been Dr. Ahmed Lary and Dr. Mohammad Bafaquh. Their thoughtful evaluation ensured rigor, scientific accuracy, and fairness throughout the process.

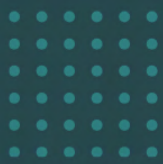
We also acknowledge with deep gratitude Ms. Emy Lou Guillet, whose dedication over the years has been instrumental in bringing NeuroGraphia to life. Our thanks extend to Mr. Bilal Ahmed and Ms. Uma (KR) for their continued support, particularly in the preparation of certificates with consistency and care.

We are sincerely grateful to SANS for its financial and organisational support. Special appreciation goes to Dr. Khalid Bajunaid, head of the Scientific Committee; Dr. Abdulhadi Al Qahtani, head of the Organising Committee; and Prof. Abdulrazak Ajlan, the SANS2026 conference chairman, for their leadership and commitment.

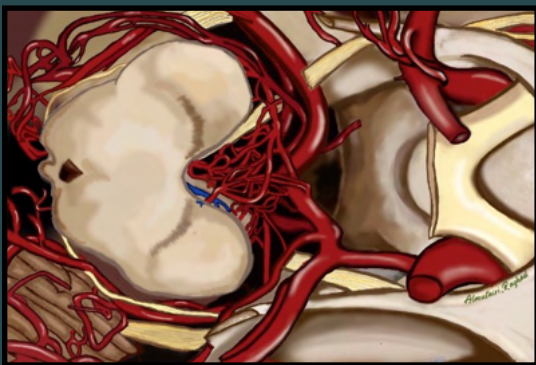
Finally, we extend our thanks to Professor Abdulrazak Ajlan, former SANS president; Professor Amr Al-Habib, former SANS president; and Dr. Fawaz S. Almotairi, current SANS president, for their continued support and belief in this initiative—support that has allowed NeuroGraphia to grow steadily over the years.

NeuroGraphia is, at its heart, more than a competition. It reflects a deeper principle—that where neuroscience meets expression, knowledge finds meaning.

NEUROGRAPHIA VI, 2026



# Neuroscience Category



**Raghad A. Almutairi**

**1st Place**

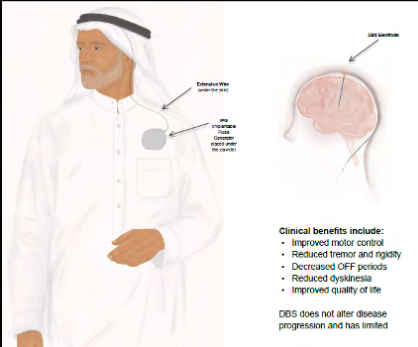
*"Anatomical Illustrations"*



**Saad Alsuwayhib**

**2nd Place**

*"Mass Reduction Clipping Technique for a Large Wide-Neck MCA Bifurcation Aneurysm"*



**DEEP BRAIN STIMULATION IN PARKINSON'S DISEASE**  
*Modulating Basal Ganglia Circuits to Restore Motor Function*

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder caused by degeneration of nigrostriatal dopaminergic neurons, resulting in abnormal basal ganglia activity and impaired motor control.

Deep brain stimulation (DBS) is a surgical therapy involving implantation of intracranial electrodes connected to an implantable pulse generator, delivering continuous high-frequency stimulation to specific subcortical targets.

In Parkinson's disease, primary targets include the Subthalamic nucleus (STN) and globus pallidus interna (GPI), with the ventral intermediate nucleus (VIM) used in tremor-dominant cases.

**Clinical benefits include:**

- Improved motor control
- Reduced tremor and rigidity
- Decreased OFF periods
- Reduced dyskinesia
- Improved quality of life

DBS does not alter disease progression and has limited

**Rawan Salim Alyami**

**3rd Place**

*"DBS Infoaraphic"*

NEUROGRAPHIA VI, 2026

Neuro-art Category

**Khaled Al-Ghamdi**  
1st Place  
*"Bouquet"*



**Abdulhamid Elfeky**  
2nd Place

**Abdulelah Asiri**  
3rd Place  
*"Common Language"*



# #SANS 2026

## Gratitude & Looking Forward



Science. Strategy. Support. One team, one mission

SANS 2026 would not have been possible without the unwavering dedication of the Scientific Committee, who shaped a rigorous and forward-looking program; the Organising Committee, who turned vision into seamless execution; and our Sponsors and Industry Partners, whose support brought innovation to every corner of the conference. This event was built by many hands – and every one of them deserves our deepest thanks

### ***Looking Forward***

SANS 2026 was not an endpoint. It was the blueprint for Neurosurgery 2030. We look forward to welcoming you to SANS 2027 and beyond.

# #SANS 2026 IN FRAMES

*Moments That Matter*



Attention earned



Proud moment on stage



Warm smiles, bright future



Built by many



Smiles for neurosurgery



Knowledge shared



Skills that stick



The next generation



Eyes on the future

***SANS 2026 was not just a meeting.  
It was a community, captured here – frame by frame***

# #SANS 2026

## The Future of Learning: SANS Broadcast Launched



### Voices of Saudi Neurosurgery

SANS Broadcast launched at the 20th Annual Meeting — preserving the voices and stories of Saudi neurosurgery's pioneers.




### NEW at SANS 2026

Behind-the-scenes interviews  
Hosted by **Dr. Ahmed Al-Jishi**



### CONVERSATIONS INCLUDED:

- Personal journeys
- Evolution of training
- Early challenges
- Vision for the future



### FEATURED PIONEERS

Prof. Abdulrahman Alanazi  
Dr. Ahmed Al Ferayan  
Dr. Ahmed Alkhani  
Dr. Mohammed Alwohaibi  
Dr. Mahmoud Alyamani



### Goals

- Document Saudi neurosurgery
- Connect generations
- Inspire young physicians
- Strengthen community

# #SANS 2026

## SANS Broadcast Launched

By Dr. Ahmed Al Jishi, BSc, MD, FRCSC

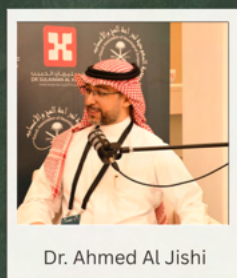
*SANS Board Member*

*Head of Website and Media Committee*

**What happened in Jeddah no longer stays in Jeddah. At SANS 2026,**

During the 20th Annual Meeting of the Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS), a new media initiative was introduced: "SANS Broadcast." Hosted by Dr. Ahmed Al-Jishi, this behind-the-scenes platform brought the voices, stories, and experiences of Saudi neurosurgery pioneers closer to current and future generations. Interviews were conducted live in front of conference participants and recorded for future release through official SANS media channels. Featured leaders included Prof. Abdulrahman Alanazi, Dr. Ahmed Al Ferayan, Dr. Ahmed Alkhani, Dr. Mohammed Alwohaibi, and Dr. Mahmoud Alyamani. The discussions

explored personal journeys, early challenges, the evolution of training, and visions for the future – often with emotional reflections that deeply resonated with attendees. The goals were clear: document the history of Saudi neurosurgery, strengthen generational connections, increase conference engagement, and present a more human and inspiring side of the specialty. The positive feedback highlighted the importance of preserving experiences and inspiring younger physicians. By God's will, SANS Broadcast will continue to develop in future meetings as part of the broader vision of SANS media and outreach.



Dr. Ahmed Al Jishi



Prof. Abdulrahman Alanazi



Dr. Ahmed Alkhani



Dr. Ahmed Al Ferayan



Dr. Mohammed Alwohaibi



Dr. Mahmoud Alyamani

# COMMUNITY MILESTONES

## THE FIRST, AND STILL THE BENCHMARK

A Tribute to Dr. Maher Hassouna

### Dr. Maher Hassounah



Dr. Maher Hassounah was the first Saudi neurosurgeon to earn the FRCSC in Neurosurgery – a milestone that opened the door for all who followed.

For over thirty years at KFSHRC, he served as Head of Neurosurgery, helped build the national training system, and mentored generations of residents. Calm, composed, and always two steps ahead, he didn't just practice neurosurgery. He built the

foundation. He retired just months ago. The hospital will feel different. But his legacy remains.

“

*Dr. Hassounah didn't just make history; he created a specialty.*

-Prof. AlKhani-

# FROM A COLLEAGUE'S HEART

*More Than a Mentor: A Personal Tribute to  
Dr. Maher Hassounah*

**If neurosurgery in Saudi Arabia had founders, Dr. Maher Hassounah would undoubtedly be among them**

**By Prof. Ahmed Alkhani**

Consultant Neurosurgeon | KAMC

Dr. Maher Hassounah was the first Saudi neurosurgeon to obtain the Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (FRCSC) in Neurosurgery, a milestone that opened the door for every Saudi neurosurgeon who followed. He was also among the first recipients of the Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS) Midas Golden Medal, the association's highest honour, recognising lifetime achievement and pioneering contributions to the specialty in the Kingdom.

Before moving to Canada, Maher had the opportunity to work with giants like Osama Al-Mufti and John Fox. He left for Edmonton, Alberta, to complete his neurosurgical residency. In the early 1990s, he returned to Riyadh to join King Faisal Specialist Hospital & Research Centre, where he remained for over thirty years, demonstrating unparalleled dedication to a single institution throughout his entire career.

For many years, he served as Head of Neurosurgery at KFSHRC. In addition, he served a term as Chair of the Scientific Council for Neurosurgery at the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties (SCFHS). Maher didn't just practice neurosurgery; he also helped build the system that trains neurosurgeons in the Kingdom today. As a teacher, he was the one who would hand you instruments in the OR, like the CUSA, and quietly say, "Go ahead." I was his resident for a few months, and he gave me my first real shot in the OR. He was always calm, composed, and two steps ahead.



Our offices faced each other for over 15 years after I joined KFSH-RC in 2000. He was a mentor, a supporter, and the most disciplined man I have ever known. We traveled together, debated life, and I learned from him every single day.

Maher retired just a couple of months ago. The hospital, for sure, would feel different without him.

Dr. Maher was the first to get there—and he spent the next 30 years ensuring the path remained open for everyone else. From earning his FRCSC to receiving the Midas

Golden Medal, his career was a series of firsts. He didn't just make history; he created a specialty.

On behalf of the Neurosurgical Society of our Kingdom, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Maher Hassounah for an exceptional neurosurgical career marked by remarkable achievements and success. As he turns a new page in his life, we wish him continued joy, fulfilment, and personal accomplishments.

## A Legacy of Neurosurgery: From Resident to Leader



## FROM A COLLEAGUE'S HEART

*A Personal Tribute to Dr. Maher Hassounah*

### **The Man of Honour, a Founding Father of Neurosurgery in the Middle East and a Living Legend**

**By Dr. Faisal Farrash**

Consultant Neurosurgeon | KFSH&RCKAMC

I am deeply honoured to write this tribute to my mentor and professor, Dr. Maher Ibrahim Hassounah. Dr. Hassounah is, without a doubt, the teacher of teachers, the professor of professors, and the educator of educators. For nearly half a century, his dedication to his patients, to education, and to the advancement of neurosurgical training has been nothing short of inspiring. He is truly one of the greatest founding fathers of neurosurgical practice in the region.

Dr. Hassounah completed his early education in Jordan and obtained his medical degree in Egypt. He then joined King Faisal Specialist Hospital & Research Centre (KFSH&RC) in Riyadh as part of the hospital's earliest group of residents. Subsequently, he traveled to Edmonton, Canada, to complete his neurosurgical training and became the first Saudi to earn the Canadian Board certification in neurosurgery. Since then, he has returned to KFSH&RC Riyadh, where he has

spent the majority of his neurosurgical career.

Back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Dr. Hassounah trained with many pioneers in the field, including Dr. Osamah Al Mefty and Dr. John Fox.

I remember meeting Dr. Al Mefty at one of the AANS meetings.

Saying to him, "I was one of his very first trainees." He looked at me and replied, "I can't believe you did," due to obvious age-related reasons. I said, "You have trained Dr. Maher Hassounah, who in turn trained me." He looked at me and said in a deep voice, "Oh, Maher holds a very close and dear place in my heart."

I instantly replied, "And so, in the hearts of everyone who knows him."

I was extremely fortunate to know Dr. Hassounah for nearly half of my adult life and to spend almost my entire neurosurgical residency training—four of six years—under his supervision, where I learned everything I needed to know about the field from him.

## FROM A COLLEAGUE'S HEART

*A Personal Tribute to Dr. Maher Hassounah*

I used to tell my fellow residents that their training was never complete until they had spent time training with Dr. Hassounah. Later, I was blessed again to return from my fellowship abroad and become his office and clinic neighbour.

We shared the same operating days, the same residents and fellows for coverage, and cared for the same group of patients. I adopted many habits and traits from Dr. Hassounah; perhaps the most prominent was conducting a brief early morning round of the active operating rooms each day to review each surgeon's schedule, examine images with the team, and discuss challenges and approaches.

During all these years, my colleagues and I in the Department of Neurosurgery always turned to him for consultation, opinions, guidance, and wisdom—for answers to the most difficult questions. His insights were like sea light towers that my colleagues and I, as well as everyone in the department, sought for guidance and help.

There was a chair in his office that I used to call "the wisdom chair." I would knock on his door—"Come in," he would say—and then sit quietly as we spoke for hours. Our

conversations ranged not only over neurosurgery but also art, technology, economics, mathematics, education, medical innovation—and sometimes life itself. Whenever I needed clarity or personal guidance, that chair was my refuge.

If you were ever looking for Dr. Hassounah in the hospital, it was easy—you wouldn't need directions. You only needed to look for the largest circle of gathered residents, interns, and students, and you would find him in the middle—teaching, explaining, inspiring—while everyone listened attentively.

Those close to Dr. Hassounah know his unmatched work ethic over the past half-century. He was always the first to arrive at work and the last to leave, the first to show up for rounds, and the person every surgeon in the department—regardless of seniority or experience—looked up to for help whenever there was an uncontrollable situation in the operating room.

He offered assistance in the OR and on-call coverage selflessly, expecting nothing in return. He was always present and available whenever any of us needed support.

# FROM A COLLEAGUE'S HEART

## *A Personal Tribute to Dr. Maher Hassounah*

People close to him also know that he is an avid reader with a deep love for Arabic literature. He has remarkable mastery of both Arabic and English writing; he can catch spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes instantly from miles away. His reports are so pristine and well written that they resemble pieces of 17th-century English literature.

More importantly, he possessed a rare yet remarkable gift: the ability to convey complex ideas and messages in the simplest, most elegant way possible.

Perhaps one of my own personal stories that sheds some light on how Dr. Hassounah was is a personal story I will share:

My grandfather passed away almost 30 years before I was born. As a child, I would often ask my father what he was like, and I recall my father saying:

"يا ولدي، جدك كان يمشي على الأرض وينبت الورد من تحت موطئ قدميه."

"Your grandfather was a man who, when he walked, the earth blossomed beneath his footsteps." I spent my childhood wondering what it is like to be a man who, when walking, makes the earth blossom beneath his feet.

I saw this twice in my life: first in my father, God bless him—and upon joining the neurosurgical team at King Faisal Specialist Hospital, I saw it again in Dr. Hassounah. He is a man who walks this earth and leaves something beautiful behind him.

To the people who worked and learned from him, I say continue to carry on his message. To the young generation who

missed the opportunity to work with him, I say perhaps one of the greatest losses you, my colleagues, have to endure is the missed opportunity to train under Dr. Maher Hassounah. But perhaps this passage sheds some light on the message he wanted to deliver. There is no doubt that Dr. Hassounah is a shining star in the realm of healthcare. He serves as an excellent example and role model for all of us. He has set the bar very high for us to follow. Words of gratitude, thanks, and appreciation can never fully express the positive feelings and lasting impressions he has left on the hearts and minds of those who know him, as well as the people he has helped and worked with.

May God Almighty bless him and reward him in the best possible way for all the service and goodwill he has shown to his patients, trainees, and colleagues. Amen.

To him, I say it's time to rest, travel, and enjoy the beautiful destinations, art, food, and culture this wonderful planet has to offer.

**Yours faithfully, Your loving and grateful**

student



## FEATURE

## Neurosurgery in Saudi Arabia: Reflections at the Close of a Neurosurgical Career

**Editor's Note:** We are honoured to share a reflective essay by Prof. Jamjoom, who recently retired after a distinguished career. His insights on the evolution of neurosurgery in the Kingdom are presented in full below

### Prof. Abdulhakim B. Jamjoom FRCS(SN)

Past Professor of Neurosurgery, King Saud Bin Abdulaziz  
University for Health Sciences  
Former Chairman of Neurosurgery, King Abdulaziz  
Medical City  
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

On December 11, 2025, I retired from clinical neurosurgical practice, ending a four-decade career in neurosurgery, of which more than 35 years were spent serving patients in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). It was a deeply meaningful milestone in my life. I was humbled by the generosity and warmth of my colleagues at King Abdulaziz Medical City (KAMC), Jeddah, in the farewell celebrations they arranged, and I was equally touched by the kind messages from my colleagues within the Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS). Saying goodbye to a profession that has shaped one's identity for so long inevitably invites reflection. I look back

with gratitude, pride, and satisfaction. During my career, KSA neurosurgery grew exponentially in the number of neurosurgeons, the breadth of subspecialties, and the depth of technical advancement. Yet growth brings complexity, and complexity brings new pressures that today's young neurosurgeons will experience very differently from my generation. I am grateful to Dr. Khalid Siddiqui, Editor-in-Chief of the SANS Newsletter, for inviting me to share these reflections. What follows represents my personal observations shaped by years of practice in KSA and by earlier contributions to the SANS Newsletter.

---

## Neurosurgery in Saudi Arabia: Prof. Abdulhakim B. Jamjoom

### • **Neurosurgery in Saudi Arabia: Sectorized Rather than Regionalized**

In most developed healthcare systems, neurosurgical services are regionalised: complex care is concentrated in well-resourced centres with defined catchment areas. Regionalization improves outcomes, enhances training, reduces duplication, and promotes cost efficiency.

In KSA, however, neurosurgery has evolved in a sectorized manner. High-volume tertiary centres have developed according to their funding government sectors and institutional history rather than unified national planning. Although the Ministry of Health (MOH) has made significant progress toward regional healthcare organisation, the coexistence of multiple government-funded sectors has resulted in parallel systems operating within close geographical proximity. As a result, several neurosurgical centres may exist within the same city, each serving widely dispersed patient populations while, in practice, competing. This structural reality is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, and future neurosurgeons must work within this framework while striving for collaboration rather than competition.

### • **Neurosurgeon Clustering: Strength or Saturation?**

Closely linked to regionalisation is the issue of workforce distribution. There is currently a high concentration of neurosurgeons in major KSA cities such as Riyadh and Jeddah, while peripheral regions remain underserved. Clustering

has advantages: it fosters excellence, facilitates collaboration, and supports subspecialisation. However, unchecked clustering may also lead to reduced operative exposure, professional frustration, and unhealthy competition.

A balanced national workforce strategy is needed—one that aligns training output, subspecialty expertise, and regional needs. Newly qualified neurosurgeons must recognise that employment may not always be available in their city of choice. At the same time, healthcare providers have a responsibility to ensure that smaller centres are adequately resourced so that neurosurgeons are not placed in the difficult position of acting merely as referral intermediaries rather than treating patients safely and effectively.

### • **Subspecialisation: A Discipline to Be Respected**

Subspecialisation has transformed neurosurgical care and represents the clear direction forward. Most major KSA centres now host a full range of neurosurgical subspecialists. However, systematic adherence to subspecialty-based case distribution remains inconsistent and often depends on departmental leadership.

In centres with limited case volumes, some neurosurgeons prefer to operate outside their subspecialty rather than refer to a colleague. While understandable, this practice must always be weighed against patient interest. Intra-hospital referrals between subspecialists should be encouraged and normalised.

## Neurosurgery in Saudi Arabia: Prof. Abdulhakim B. Jamjoom

Furthermore, for rare conditions—such as acoustic schwannoma—it may be more appropriate for a limited number of surgeons within a city to develop concentrated expertise. Inter-hospital referral for such cases should be accepted as good practice, irrespective of funding sector boundaries. True maturity in a healthcare system is reflected in prioritising expertise over institutional ownership.

- **The General Neurosurgeon: Essential, Not Obsolete**

Across the KSA, many smaller neurosurgical units—particularly outside major cities—operate with one or two consultants. These units require competent, broadly trained general neurosurgeons. It is neither practical nor economically viable to staff them with multiple subspecialists. There is, however, a perception among some neurosurgical trainees that being a “general neurosurgeon” carries less prestige. Subspecialty fellowship training understandably enhances career progression, recognition by the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties (SCFHS), and earning potential. Nevertheless, our community should seriously consider establishing an SCFHS-accredited fellowship in general neurosurgery. Such a program would prepare neurosurgeons specifically for practice in smaller units and could reduce unnecessary transfers of straightforward cases to major cities—benefiting patients and the system alike.

- **Medicolegal Pressures: The Importance of Structured Decision-Making**

As neurosurgical practice becomes more complex and case volumes increase, medicolegal challenges will likely rise. Neurosurgery remains a high-risk specialty in which even well-intentioned decisions can be scrutinised. Defensive medicine, when understood as careful documentation, evidence-based indications, and shared decision-making, is prudent. Many neurosurgical indications lie within grey zones. Regular multidisciplinary team (MDT) meetings enhance accountability, improve decision-making, and strengthen patient-centred care—particularly in neuro-oncology, interventional neuroradiology, and increasingly in complex spine surgery. In my view, elective complex spine cases should routinely be discussed in MDT forums. Neurosurgeons must not only participate in clinical pathways but actively shape them.

- **Productivity and Quality Pressures: Metrics of Modern Practice**

Healthcare globally has entered the era of value-based care and cost containment. Productivity metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) are now embedded within hospital systems. Younger neurosurgeons must learn to navigate managerial expectations constructively.

However, it is important that administrators recognise the limitations of simplistic metrics. Judging productivity solely by annual operative numbers or total operating time risks misrepresenting the complexity of neurosurgical practice.

## Neurosurgery in Saudi Arabia: Prof. Abdulhakim B. Jamjoom

Nearly half of a neurosurgeon's workload may be non-operative. Variations in case numbers often reflect subspecialty focus rather than effort. Spine surgery, by its volume, naturally generates higher procedural counts. While a thriving spine service is valuable, it must not eclipse cranial subspecialties in training, funding, and institutional identity. Maintaining balance preserves the integrity of our specialty.

- **New Technology Pressures: Innovation with Prudence**

Few specialties have embraced technological innovation as enthusiastically as neurosurgery. Advances in imaging, navigation, robotics, and minimally invasive techniques are remarkable. Yet, innovation must always be guided by patient interest rather than institutional marketing or personal ambition. Every new technique carries a learning curve, and new technologies may be costly without clear evidence of superiority. Young neurosurgeons should adopt innovation thoughtfully, ensuring that technology remains a tool in service of patient care—not a showcase.

- **Research and Training: Sustaining Excellence**

Research enriches a neurosurgical career, though it is not obligatory for all. Nevertheless, young neurosurgeons—academic or otherwise—should be encouraged to engage in meaningful research. High-quality research demands planning, collaboration, and often multidisciplinary or multicentre engagement. The emerging generation

must also become conversant with artificial intelligence and advanced data tools. I trained in an era of manual statistical calculations; today's researchers can perform sophisticated analyses in a fraction of the time. These tools should enhance, not replace, critical thinking. Training in Saudi Arabia has progressed remarkably over the past two decades. The Saudi Board in Neurosurgery has matured in both quality and output. Fellowship opportunities continue to expand. However, we should preserve the valuable tradition of enabling trainees to complete at least two years of fellowship in strong centres abroad. International exposure enriches perspective, builds networks, and strengthens national standards.

- **Final Reflections**

Saudi neurosurgery is rich in talent, ambition, and resources. It continues to evolve while confronting the inherent challenges of a demanding specialty. As I step away from active practice, my enduring hope is that future generations will consistently place patient welfare above all else. Neurosurgeons must remain engaged not only in operating rooms but also in research, education, mentorship, and health system leadership. The future of neurosurgery in the Kingdom will depend on how wisely we train, distribute, support, and guide our young colleagues. I leave Saudi neurosurgery with gratitude, confidence, and optimism.

*Thank you, and farewell.*

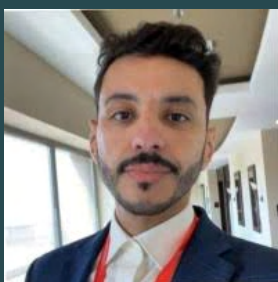
## SANS NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



### DR. AHMED LARY APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF NEUROSURGERY AT KAMC WESTERN REGION

Dr. Ahmed Lary, Consultant Neurosurgeon specializing in Neuro-Oncology at King Abdulaziz Medical City (KAMC), has been appointed as the new Chairman of Neurosurgery at the Neuroscience and Trauma Center, KAMC Western Region. This appointment recognises his clinical expertise and leadership. We congratulate Dr. Lary on this well-deserved achievement and wish him continued success.

### DR. WAEL ALSHAYA NAMED NEUROSURGERY HEAD AT KAMC RIYADH



Dr. Wael Alshaya, MBBS, FRCSC, is the new Head of Neurosurgery at King Abdulaziz Medical City in Riyadh. A specialist in paediatric neurosurgery and

complex spine care, Dr. Alshaya will lead the department's clinical and research advancements. We warmly congratulate Dr. Alshaya on his appointment, wishing him continued success in elevating neurosurgical care and inspiring future surgeons.



### NEW HEAD OF SANS ACADEMY

SANS is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Ahmed Alahmari as the new Head of the SANS Academy. He will oversee the Academy's academic programs, strategic direction, and overall development. We extend our sincere appreciation to **Dr. Ashwag Alqurashi** for her valuable contributions and dedicated leadership as previous Head of the Academy.

### DR. AHMED ALZHRANI JOINS INTERNATIONAL TL-OF STUDY

Congratulations to Dr. Ahmed AlZahrani for joining the TL-OF study, a large multicentre international trial led by the AO Spine Knowledge Forum Trauma and Infection.

The study validates the OF scoring system for osteoporotic thoracolumbar fractures. Dr. AlZahrani will represent Saudi Arabia among 15 international centres.

We wish him success in this important contribution to global spine research.



# SANS NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Saudi Conjoined Twins Program Achieves New Surgical Milestone

The medical and surgical team of the Saudi Conjoined Twins Program has achieved a new medical milestone by successfully separating the Filipino conjoined twins, **Kleya and Maurice Ann**. The surgery, one of the most complex cases worldwide, was performed at King Abdullah Specialised Children's Hospital, King Abdulaziz Medical City (KAMC), Riyadh. Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, who heads the medical and surgical team, expressed gratitude to the Saudi leadership for their continued support.

### Dr. Moutasem Azzubi: Leading the Surgical Team

Dr. Moutasem Azzubi, Consultant Paediatric Neurosurgeon, led the surgical team in this highly complex procedure. The team worked tirelessly to ensure the safety and success of the operation.

The Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS) extends its warmest congratulations to Dr. Moutasem Azzubi and the entire surgical team on this remarkable achievement. Their dedication and expertise continue to elevate Saudi Arabia's status as a global leader in this rare medical field.



### KEY DETAILS OF THE SURGERY

**Duration:** 12h 45m

**Stages:** 5 stages

#### Specialties

**Involved:** Anaesthesia, ICU, advanced imaging, plastic surgery, and supportive disciplines

**Location:** KAMC | Riyadh

## Upcoming Events



### Dear Colleagues and Friends,

On behalf of the Tunisian Neurosurgery Association, it gives me immense pleasure to welcome you all to the 15th Pan Arab Neurosurgery Conference, which will be held on 6th to 8th of November 2026 at Russelior hotel Hammamet city, Tunisia.

There will be a two-day scientific programme that promises to be a platform for insightful discussions and research presentations. It is also a valuable opportunity to reconnect, exchange ideas, and foster collaborations within our community.

We are happy to have our guests from all Arab countries and all over the world and we are opened with our hands and hearts to everyone to join us in this exceptional event.

As we gather in Hammamet, a well-known coastal city in Tunisia, famous for its beautiful sandy beaches, clear turquoise waters, and vibrant tourist scene, combining an authentic old town « Medina » with modern resorts, water sports, and

### Prof Mehdi Darmoul

Congress President

President Elect Pan Arab Neurosurgery Society

cultural attractions like jasmine and orange groves, known for its history, including Roman roots as Puppu, and as a popular holiday spot with thalassotherapy centers and nightlife.

The organizing committee is working hard to ensure a memorable and successful scientific and social event.

Looking forward to see you all in our beautiful Hammamet city

Sincerely

The Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS) extends its warmest congratulations to Dr. Moutasem Azzubi and the entire surgical team on this remarkable achievement. Their dedication and expertise continue to elevate Saudi Arabia's status as a global leader in this rare medical field.



# Upcoming Events

6<sup>th</sup> Continental African Congress of Neurosurgery  
34<sup>th</sup> Moroccan Congress of Neurosurgery  
14<sup>th</sup> WFNS Rabat Reference Center Course for African Neurosurgeons

**CAANS**  
Marrakech 2026  
13th - 17th October 2026

*AFRICA:*  
Cradle of Humanity, Heart of Global Neurosurgery

For more informations, please visit the website | <https://neurosurgerymorocco.com>

### Editorial Board

Khalid Siddiqui, MD  
Editor-in-Chief  
Ahmed Ammar, MD  
Co-Editor  
Abdulhakim Jamjoom ,MD  
Co-Editor  
Yaser Babgi ,MD  
Co-Editor

Atika Al Sudayri  
Editor | Creation, Design, News Crafting  
Sumayah Abunayyan  
SANS Administrator



### CONNECT WITH US:



sans.newsletter@sans.org.sa



www.sans.org.sa



@SansMed

The SANS Newsletter serves the Saudi neurosurgery community by documenting our collective achievements, advancing professional dialogue, and preserving the legacy of those who shaped our field. Views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily the official stance of SANS.