



NREF News

September 2015, Number 4

Newsletter Updates

Thank you for taking a few minutes to read the Neurosurgery Research & Education Foundation's (NREF) newsletter, which brings you a brief update on the activities and opportunities available through the NREF.

In this issue, you'll learn about our efforts to aid neurosurgeons in Nepal, working post-earthquake. You'll also meet our two Rhoton fellows, who capped off their experience by helping to curate the Rhoton Collection® through meeting Albert Rhoton, MD, FAANS(L) himself. In addition, you'll get an update from the recent Bagan Family Fellowship awardee.

Although we are past Labor Day, it won't be long before end-of-year appeals start to fill your mailboxes. While I'm sure many, very worthy causes are vying for your attention — both in time and in dollars — I'd ask you to consider supporting the NREF, the organization that supports your specialty. Whether providing education, fellowship and grant opportunities, or organizing the neurosurgical community to step up and provide aid to those in need, the NREF's mission is your mission and an investment in our specialty.

Thank you,

Jon H. Robertson, MD, FAANS
NREF Chair

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Neurosurgical Relief for Nepal

Please remember our ongoing efforts to raise money to aid Nepal. Funds raised are being used for poor neurosurgical patients whose injuries and issues relate to the recent, devastating earthquake. Sushu K. Shilpakar, MD, currently in Nepal, provided the following report on how funds have been used to date.

At present, the neurosurgical operation are charged minimally between Nepalese Rs 7000 to 20000 (U.S. \$ 70 - 200) and approximately 20 percent of total beds (including surgery, ICU charges) are free of cost. Calculating the average cost (U.S. \$ 100) per person, we will be able to help about 50 patients with the donation you have sent us.

Make a Donation

Learn More

Visit NREF at the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) Annual Meeting, Sept. 28-30, 2015. Learn about the Honor Your Mentor program, grants and fellowships, educational opportunities and more. NREF will be in booth #902.

The 2016-2017 Research Grants and Young Clinician Investigator Awards application cycle opens October 1 and applications are being accepted through Nov. 30, 2015. [Learn more here.](#)

Applications for the 2016 Medical Student Summer Research Fellowship open soon. The application

With Best Regards from Kathmandu, Nepal,
Sushil K Shilpakar, MD

The NREF continues to accept donations to the Nepal Relief Fund. One-hundred percent of monies raised are forwarded to Nepal, where Dr. Shilpakar and his colleagues are able to best leverage the funds to relieve suffering and to begin rebuilding Nepal.

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Rhoton Summer Fellows Join the Rhoton Collection® Team

This summer, two medical students joined the team of over 100 fellows who have worked with Albert Rhoton, MD, FAANS(L) on his spectacularly comprehensive neurosurgical atlas. A labor spanning more than four decades, the ever-expanding *Rhoton Collection*® includes thousands of anatomical images in 2D and 3D formats, with video lectures also viewable in 3D.

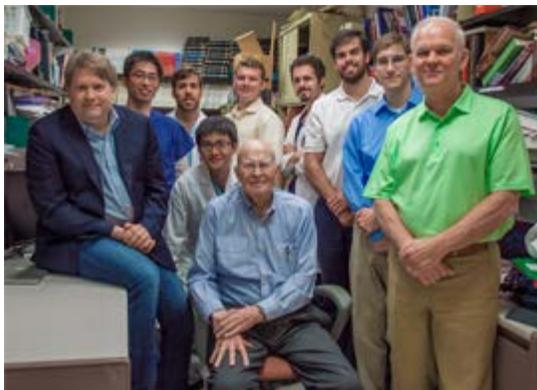
Taylor Huhta, at Tufts University, who is mentored by Tufts neurosurgery department chair, Carl Heilman, MD, FAANS; and Jock Lillard, at the University of Tennessee, mentored by Jeffrey Sorenson, MD, FAANS; at Semmes-Murphey Clinic in Memphis, worked on labelling, drawings and expanding the array of searchable topics to facilitate the hyperlinked image integration with the *Journal of Neurosurgery*. In the process, they greatly expanded their own understanding of neurosurgical anatomy.

Dr. Huhta commented, “I learned an incredible amount about the temporal bone: ten-times more than I knew existed in the gross lab.”

The Rhoton project “allows you the opportunity to learn neuroanatomy from a collection of images unlike anything else out there,” added Dr. Lillard, who concentrated on the sphenoid bone and orbit during his summer project. He said his weekly meetings with Sorenson also provided an in-depth understanding of the specialty, which he values tremendously in contemplating future career choices.

As a special feature of their Rhoton experience, the [medical student summer fellowships](#) included a stipend allowing for Drs. Huhta and Lillard to personally present their work to Dr. Rhoton.

“He’s a unique guy; such a legend, yet so humble. He has tremendous potential to personally gain from the collection, but he has concentrated instead on just advancing the field of neurosurgery,” Dr. Huhta remarked.



Rhoton Summer Fellows Taylor Huhta (back row, fourth from left) and Jock Lillard (second from right) with members of Team Rhoton, including Drs Jeff Sorenson (left), Jon Robertson (right), and Al Rhoton (center).

deadline is Jan. 6, 2016. For more information, [click here](#).

The 2015 AANS Annual Report is now available. Please [click here](#) to read the full report.

Dr. Huhta has already spoken with his professors about integrating *The Rhoton Collection*® in the neurosurgery curriculum at Tufts. As president of his school's neurosurgery interest group, he hopes to keep the Rhoton momentum going on campus after he graduates in two years.

“He is evangelizing others,” commented Dr. Sorenson.

Dr. Rhoton’s spirit has had a personal impact on Dr. Huhta, who said that Dr. Rhoton’s modest character is “how I’d like to comport myself as a surgeon.”

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Update on Honor Your Mentor

When Amanda Muhs Saratsis, MD, received the inaugural Bagan Family Fellowship in May at the 2015 AANS Annual Scientific Meeting, she knew that it would help move her research goals forward. She’s learning quickly just how much that first investment in her research can help.

Last week I was named as a recipient of the Northwestern University Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (NUCATS) Multidisciplinary Mentored Career Development Award (KL2), an institutional career development grant, funded by the NIH, through Northwestern University (NU). This competitive, two-year award provides me with significant salary support, tuition to take masters-level courses related to my research (advanced bioinformatics, animal models of disease, etc.), protected time to participate in a structured program of grant preparation seminars, close mentorship by colleagues and career planning activities at NU, with the goal of preparing me to secure K08- or R01-level independent NIH funding in the next one to two years. Prior KL2 scholars have an excellent track record of securing this type of research support at the conclusion of their award period, and I plan to do the same.

I am certain that being able to cite my existing support from the Bagan Family Fellowship (and ongoing research sponsored by this award) on my KL2 application contributed to my success in securing this honor. In addition, the Bagan award helps to fund a significant portion of my lab technician’s salary, which has catapulted our productivity, allowing me to generate data and establish a track record of success in the lab, despite my demanding clinical obligations: the review panel for the KL2 award specifically asked me about the feasibility of the proposed research given my work as a neurosurgeon, and I was able to sincerely ensure them it could be done!

I hope this information is helpful and can reinforce how important opportunities like the Bagan funding can be to young investigators like me, working to establish a career in academic medicine and translational research.

Best,

Amanda M. Saratsis, MD
Attending Physician, Division of Pediatric Neurosurgery Ann & Robert H. Lurie
Hospital of Chicago Assistant Professor, Department of Neurological Surgery
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

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American Association of Neurological Surgeons
5550 Meadowbrook Drive, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008-3852
888.566.2267 or 847.378.0500
