

ACADEMIC SERENDIPITY

Asked to present a lecture series at the prestigious Yale University, Professor Stanley Sidhu thinks that Australian academics can easily compare on the world stage

Academic Endocrine Surgeon Professor Stanley Sidhu earlier this year became the first Australasian surgeon to deliver one of the most prestigious annual surgical lectures in America.

In May, Professor Sidhu accepted a Visiting Professorship which allowed him to deliver the 53rd Leon E. Sample Memorial Lecture, presented by the Yale University School of Medicine's Department of Surgery.

The lecture series, endowed in honour of a country surgeon who saved the life of the donor's young son, has been presented since 1957 by only the most distinguished and influential US academic surgeons.

While Dr Sample was asked to deliver the first lecture of the series, he declined the offer saying that he believed only the best speakers and surgeons should be chosen.

Yale respected both his request and vision and the list of past Sample lecturers includes the cream of American academic surgery.

It includes the inaugural lecturer, J Englebert Dunphy (1957), Edward Churchill (1963), Robert Zollinger (1972), William Blakemore (1980), Donald Trunkey (1985), Frank G Moody (1992), Karel Pacak (2002) and Steven K Libutti (2010).

Now Professor Sidhu's name is added to that roll call.

Professor Sidhu conducts his clinical work and research at the University of Sydney Endocrine Surgical Unit and as Senior Researcher in the Cancer Genetics Group Kolling Institute of Medical Research based at Sydney's North Shore Hospital.

His lecture to the Yale surgical and academic community

was titled "Neuromonitoring of the Recurrent and External Laryngeal Nerves and Impact of Voice Outcome in Thyroidectomy".

In announcing Professor Sidhu's lecture, Yale described him as having made significant contributions to the understanding of the oncogenomics of adrenocortical cancer and the use of microRNAs as diagnostic, prognostic and therapeutic targets in adrenocortical cancer, malignant pheochromocytoma and thyroid cancer.

It also praised him for the impact of his 154 highly-cited original papers published in peer reviewed journals.

The literature published to promote Dr Sidhu's lecture reads in part: "(His) translational scientific articles have been published in leading cancer journals such as Cancer Cell, Clinical Cancer Research, Cancer and Cancer Medicine and specialty journals such as Endocrine Related Cancer, the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and the Annals of Surgery.

"He has been a regular speaker at the scientific meetings of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and American Association of Academic Surgeons.

"For his scientific work, he was an invited speaker at the 3rd-5th International Symposia of Adrenocortical Cancer and has spoken at the American Association of Cancer Research (AACR) meeting .

"Speaking at the AACR is a rare privilege for an Australian Scientist.

"Professor Sidhu is President of Australian Endocrine Surgeons and Chairman of the Section of Endocrine Surgery at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

"The Sample Lecture is usually given by only the most senior US academic surgeons in their field and of their time so to be the first Australian invited to present the lecture is an honour."

"He currently sits on the Editorial Board of the Oncologist and the Annals of Surgery, the leading and oldest surgical science journal in the world.

"Professor Sidhu is the first Australian surgeon ever invited to serve on (that) Editorial Board primarily because of a dual understanding of clinical and translational research in endocrine tumours.

"He has mentored 21 clinical Fellows in Endocrine Surgery and supervised 10 doctoral students in laboratory research whom have progressed to become leaders in clinical surgery and translational cancer research.

"His career achievement to date embodies the spirit of a clinically active and academically productive surgeon scientist and we are honoured to welcome Dr Stanley Sidhu as our 2015 Lecturer."

Speaking to Surgical News about the lecture, Professor Sidhu said he had enjoyed the experience but played down the honour of the invitation and said it had come about simply through serendipity.

"The past President of the International Association of Endocrine Surgery, Professor Robert Udelsman from Yale, attended the College's ASC in Singapore and attended the lecture I gave there," Professor Sidhu said.

"He found it quite stimulating and somewhat controversial and invited me to give the Sample Lecture at Yale which means that I was just the right person in the right place at the right time.

"Yet, the Sample Lecture is usually given by only the most senior US academic surgeons in their field and of their time so to be the first Australian invited to present the lecture is an honour."

Professor Sidhu spent two days in May this year as a guest of Yale, located in New Haven, Connecticut, where he visited an adrenal and thyroid cancer laboratory and attended surgery at the Yale University Hospital.

He described the invitation to speak as recognition of the quality of scientific research conducted in Australia which has been strongly supported by RACS for over a decade.

Professor Sidhu was initially a Sir Roy McGaughey-funded PhD student.

"We can't do the multi-million dollar research projects that can be done in the US simply because of our population size and the consequent impact on the money available to science," Professor Sidhu said.

"Yet we can keep up with scientific developments made elsewhere, read all the available literature and apply that knowledge to under-resourced areas of interest or rarer cancers in the hope of a break-through.

"There is no doubt that we can compete with the rest of the world in terms of scientific research, it's just easier to find the money in the US or Europe."

Professor Sidhu said that while the specialty of Endocrine Surgery in Australia had a long history of developing international networks, a Sydney-based collaboration was helping push Australian endocrine science into a position of global leadership.

He said that for the first time Australia now had a large multi-faceted endocrine cancer research group assembled through the Kolling Institute located at the Royal North Shore Hospital working in collaboration with the University of Sydney and biotechnology company EnGeneIC.

"This is one of the major research facilities in the country where there is a multidisciplinary team of clinicians and scientists focused on progressing translational research in endocrine cancers and it's a unique arrangement which developed from the merging of leadership in Endocrinology, Endocrine Surgery and Clinician Scientists," he said.

"Rare cancers like those we study are increasingly becoming the focus of international interest with technological advances allowing us to trial novel therapies which could have



Professor Stanley Sidhu

implications for more common cancers.”

Professor Sidhu praised the efforts made by the College over the past 10 years to promote Academic Surgery to young surgeons and Trainees.

“The push to promote the role of academic surgeons in Australia during the past 10 years has also been important in advancing the quality of surgical science, particularly through the activities offered through the Section of Academic Surgery such as meetings and courses designed to help young surgeon scientists get established,” he said.

“We have had nine surgeon scientists complete their PhDs through the University of Sydney Endocrine Surgical Unit and the Kolling Institute, all of whom were supported by Fellowships funded by the College’s Foundation for Surgery.

“They have gone on to become leaders in their field and I am indebted to the College for making those funds available and helping us to train the leaders of the next generation of Academic Surgeons.”

Professor Sidhu is currently leading world first research into the use of microRNAs to reduce adrenocortical cancer (ACC) and the use of long noncoding RNA as a biomarker to test for disease recurrence.

With Karen Murphy

IN MEMORIAM

Our condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the following Fellows whose death has been notified over the past month:

Vanessa Wright	UK Fellow
Ross Adie	Victorian Fellow
David J Cohen	Queensland Fellow
Salil R Chowdhury	New Zealand Fellow
William B James	Queensland Fellow
Madappa Maitah	Victorian Fellow
Michael E Shackleton	New Zealand Fellow
John Walker	NSW Fellow
Kevin King	Victorian Fellow
Ross Campbell	NSW Fellow
Geoffrey Coldham	New Zealand Fellow
Thomas Nash	NSW Fellow
Graham Peck	Victorian Fellow
Labeeb McGuire	Queensland Fellow
Reginald Van Der Straaten	NSW Fellow (2014)
Graham Peck	SA Fellow (2013)

RACS is currently trialling the publication of abridged Obituaries in Surgical News. The full versions of all obituaries can be found on the RACS website at www.surgeons.org/member-services/In-memoriam

Informing the College

If you wish to notify the College of the death of a Fellow, please contact the manager in your regional office:

ACT: Eve.Edwards@surgeons.org
NSW: Allan.Chapman@surgeons.org
NZ: Justine.Peterson@surgeons.org
QLD: David.Watson@surgeons.org
SA: Daniela.Ciccarello@surgeons.org
TAS: Dianne.Cornish@surgeons.org
VIC: Denice.Spence@surgeons.org
WA: Angela.D'Castro@surgeons.org

Leaving a gift in your will make a significant contribution to helping your Foundation for Surgery continue to change lives through surgery. To find out more about bequests please contact the Foundation of Surgery Manager, Jessica Redwood on +61 3 9249 1110



FINGER FOOD FESTIVITIES

Beware these perfidious morsels



BY PROFESSOR GRUMPY

There is one thing that really annoys me and it is finger food. With Christmas just around the corner it is just the right time to warn of these perfidious things. As I am sure that you all know one of the meanings of “perfidious” is untrustworthy. That is exactly what finger food is.

They appear delicious tasty morsels. The aroma precedes them usually towards the last 20 minutes of a “brief” welcome from the great man (I am not beING sexist here as the exceedingly verbose welcome is nearly always from a male – females usually just say what needs to be said and sit down). The smell of bacon, or curry or grilled cheese wafts around the room making it hard to concentrate on the words of the somewhat pompous chairman or president or whatever.

At last the food comes. Beware of the little sausages wrapped in bacon as they will squirt liquid if you bite them in half; never does the squirt go harmlessly into space but always towards you and your clean shirt or blouse. Don't forget the buried toothpick that will stab your gum or break an incisor. As for the chicken tandoori – don't take any yogurt with it no matter how firm it looks as the yogurt warms when added to

the food and becomes runny- runny down your fingers and down your hand and onto your shirt cuff. The best way with these little suckers is to put the whole thing into your mouth at once even if that means that all intelligible conversation will be lost.

Mini pizzas seem safe enough but the cheese tends to congeal into a glob that has no adherence to the pizza base and comes off as a whole leaving itself dangling from the corner of your mouth – most inelegant particularly if you have a beard and it adheres to the whiskers. Again a whole of mouth approach is advised.

Mini pies (or party pies as they are called even if it is for use at a funeral) can be a trap. Their pastry case is filled with just enough meat to cause a bite to squeeze some of the contents out which will immediately seek your tie or that special brooch. Pasties are slight safer as they are less runny but whatever you do don't add sauce as that adds another level of complexity.

I need hardly mention prawns, muscles or oysters. If you are silly enough to go for them you deserve what you get – smelly stick fingers and clothes if you spill any of the juices.

Then there are the other problems. Plates are not provided as that would make it plate food, wouldn't it? We only provide serviettes that are too thin and fall apart at the first bit of liquid. We generously give you little skewers in the meat but what do you do with 12 of these when the other hand has a glass in it?

So what is the curmudgeon's guide to finger food this Christmas? Pasties are safest but no sauce and definitely as a single mouthful. Cheese and biscuits are probably OK, but not olives (stones !) Chocolate is good also as long as it is solid and not mini-chocolate mouses (one bite and it runs – watch out).

Or you could do what this curmudgeon does – refuse all Christmas invitations that do not state silver service. Happy Christmas!