

Conference Report

We are back to life, Are you? The 16th annual meeting of the Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS), Riyadh, March 25th–27th, 2022

Ahmed Alkhani M.D.; Ahmed Aloraidi M.D.

Division of Neurosurgery, Department of Surgery, King Abdulaziz Medical City, Ministry of the National Guard – Health Affairs, King Saud Bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

ORCID

Ahmed Alkhani: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9920-1544>; Ahmed Aloraidi: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7109-1075>

Under the theme of **‘Back to Life,’** the Saudi Association of Neurological Surgery (SANS) organized its 16th annual meeting in Riyadh on March 25th–27th, 2022. The event was hosted by King Abdulaziz Medical City, National Guard Health Affairs, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The theme was self-explanatory as the whole world was suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many associations worldwide, SANS was forced in 2021 to conduct its annual meeting in virtual format. Therefore, this year, the 2022 annual meeting was a hybrid one. More than 500 delegates registered and attended in person and enjoyed an outstanding scientific program, pre-conference workshops, social activities, and industrial exhibitions. In addition, more than 1000 registrants worldwide were able to attend the scientific program virtually.

SANS 2022 meeting this year consisted of a two full-day scientific program divided into four plenary sessions and six-afternoon sessions in three parallel tracts, in addition to two special sessions and the opening ceremony. The first day’s special session was devoted to the late Professor Khalaf Almutairi’s lecture. This year, this important annual memorial lecture was presented by Professor Andres Lozano, University of Toronto, Canada. Dr. Lozano gave a fascinating talk about ‘Advances in Deep Brain Stimulation. The second day’s special session was presented by Dr. Mohammed Al Wohaibi, who gave an interesting talk on the history of neurosurgery at the National Guard Hospital in Riyadh under the title of ‘Memories.’ This was followed by a recognition session for three of our senior neurosurgeons who have retired from our institute, including Dr. Al Wohaibi himself, Dr. Ahmed Al Furayan, and Dr. Abdulaziz Al Arifi.

Article History

Received: 9 May 2022
Accepted: 9 May 2022
Published: 19 July 2022

© Alkhani A, Aloraidi A. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

The pre-conference workshops were another success story. Participation was overwhelming. The workshops were fully booked well before the date of the conference. The feedback from the participants was very assuring and inspiring to bring them in in the upcoming meetings in the coming few years. The lumbar spine surgery hands-on course (open surgery, MISS, microscopic and endoscopic approaches) led by Dr. David Pinilla Arias, SANS neurosurgery study workshop directed to neurosurgical trainee led by Dr. Nabeel Alshafai, future neuroscientists competition led by Prof. Ahmed Ammar, student neurosurgical boot-camp led by Dr. Wisam Al-issawi, and neuroscience nursing skills workshop led by Dr. Ibrahim Alhalal were all presented at high academic standards. In addition, we continued with great success the initiative of Dr. Abdulrahman Alsabbagh for the annual NeuroGraphia neuroscience art competition with some superb and outstanding artworks in this year's collections.

The opening ceremony was conducted under the patronage of his excellency Dr. Bandar Al Knawy, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of National Guard Health Affairs. During this ceremony, his excellency (HE) presented the trophies for this year's SANS International Award Medal recipient Dr. Lozano, the 2022 SANS medal to Prof. Essam Al-Shail, and the 2021 SANS medal to Prof. Saleh Baesa. In addition, HE gave a welcoming speech to the conference's international and national faculties and delegates.

The scientific program was vibrant with diverse international speakers. Thanks to the very high standards of international and national speakers who gave their presentations in-person or online. We were honored to have Prof. Najia Alabadi, Bernhard Meyer, and Juan Carlos Fernandez-Miranda among our international distinguished guest speakers.

Neurosurgical subspecialties sessions were allocated in the afternoon parallel tracts. These included skull-base, neuro-oncology, vascular/endovascular, spine, and pediatric neurosurgery. In addition to a special session in collaboration with the Saudi Epilepsy Society, we Received approval for a maximum of 16 CME hours from the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties for our attendees. This year, the SANS meeting was honored to collaborate with many international, regional, and national societies, including the World Federation of Neurological Societies (WFNS), World Society for Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery (WSSFN), Pan Arab Neurosurgical Society (PANS), Middle Eastern Society for Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery (MSSFN), Arab Spine, Saudi Spine Society, and Saudi Epilepsy Society. This year, our SANS meeting was in conjunction with the third meeting of the MSSFN, a regional society devoted to this subspeciality in neurosurgery. This was the third meeting after the first and second meetings in Dubai and Cairo. The society meeting scientific program was included in the mainstream SANS activities. Two sessions were devoted to this subspeciality in the afternoon parallel sessions distributed during the two-day scientific program.

The industrial exhibition was quite distinguished this year. After the COVID-19 quarantine period, many industrial companies had the chance to exhibit their latest products in neurosurgery and spine surgery. On the other hand, the delegates enjoyed the unbiased exposure to this part of the conference. With more than 15 exhibitors, the SANS annual meeting proved itself a major yearly event in the region. Furthermore, such collaboration helped to support the financial load of the academic activities and allowed us to provide free registration for all our neurosurgical trainees and online virtual registrants.

Finally, the opening reception and the faculty dinner were exceptional events for our association members and meeting delegates to meet each other in person and restrengthen the scientific and social bonds to push forward our practice in the field of neurosurgery. We believe that our

late meeting proved undoubtedly that we all want the COVID-19 era to end, and we said it loudly that we are **'BACK TO LIFE.'** We hope to see you all at the next annual SANS meeting in 2023 in Jeddah. Till then, please stay in good health.

