

## **FIENS Fellowships Enhance Opportunities for Neurosurgical Trainees**

Robert Dempsey

The Foundation for International Education in Neurological Surgery (FIENS) has long been a collaborator with the WFNS. FIENS has acted synergistically with WFNS on their common goal of enhancing neurosurgical care worldwide through education. The concerning lack of high-quality neurosurgical care worldwide has been well documented, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Adequate access to lifesaving neurosurgical care is felt to be absent to approximately 5.5 billion people worldwide. There are many solutions to this problem, which will involve comprehensive programs looking at all aspects of society, healthcare, prevention, stability of government and peace to allow healthcare to continue. A common element of the solution must always include education. The synergy of the WFNS and FIENS efforts in this regard is clear and heartening. WFNS through its foundation supported multiple regional centers for neurosurgical education, particularly important for training the first neurosurgeon from a region or country of need. FIENS working in over 27 sites worldwide has always adopted a role of establishing training in the region of need for and by local physicians and supported by local society and government. The results are now hundreds and even thousands of new neurosurgical trainees are starting to address the worldwide need for specialized care of patients with neurosurgical needs.

A very important aspect of the FIENS program has been the FIENS fellowships. These target important aspects of training either to fill gaps in training or to allow bright young people to succeed in their neurosurgical training. Over the past eight years, FIENS has awarded 52 fellowships toward this effort, realizing that each neurosurgical trainee will literally impact thousands upon thousands of patients.

The FIENS fellowships are of two types. The first, pioneered by the generous donations of philanthropist Dick Bassett, allowed the formation of the Bassett fellowships which are designated to allow a finishing period, usually of three months, for a neurosurgical trainee who is dedicated to serving in an area of need. This fellowship allows them to be sponsored for a period at a highly established neurosurgical program for specialized training to help finish their education, this could be in a particular procedure or such things as the training necessary to establish an academic training program of their own. Indeed, this principle of training the trainers has been the most successful of all. This is an extremely popular program, and we are happy to report that further funding has now been established to expand the program by including the Mukhtar A. Sheikh fellowship.

A second essential fellowship pioneered through the generous donation of the Richard and Sue Clack family are the Clack family fellowships. These address a particular shortcoming in our training programs where very good trainees, often supported by their local government, are in the process of training and have run out of funds, either because of loss of government support or any number of all-too-common reasons. These people often have to leave their neurosurgical training and this opportunity is lost for patients of the future. The Clack family have stepped in with fellowships to allow bridge funding during a year of hardship with a goal of helping people to complete their training so they can return to their country and provide care. This has been both extremely successful and rewarding, but has also uncovered a great need, which FIENS hopes to progressively address.

During the past year, these fellowships, while well supported, have still attracted 75 applicants, so the need remains quite great. We are very proud of the success of these applicants. They have

represented their countries extremely well, from ranging from trainees from Africa: Kenya, Ghana, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, Congo, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Cote D'Ivoire, Algeria, to Asia: Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Mongolia, Thailand, to the Americas: Bolivia, Haiti, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and others such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia. The impact of these fellowships is truly worldwide, and the success of the fellows finds them now leading the young neurosurgery programs of FIENS and helping to solidify the post graduate curriculum of virtual visiting professors, boot camps and advance level courses. It is truly an example of fellowships being used to train the future trainees and the people who provide care for patients worldwide, including those that are not yet born. These programs have become one of the largest purveyors of post graduate fellowship education in neurosurgery and their impact will be lasting. Further information on these is available at the FIENS website, FIENS.org, including information on the twice annual call for applications.

In summary, this is an excellent demonstration that we can only make progress with the worldwide need for specialized neurosurgical care if we remember that we do this by partnering together for the good of those patients we serve. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Dempsey, MD

Chairman and Manucher J. Javid Professor of Neurological Surgery  
Department of Neurological Surgery, University of Wisconsin SMPH  
Chairman, Foundation for International Education in Neurological Surgery



The graphic features a blue background with a white grid pattern. At the top left, the text "2024 FELLOWS" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Below this, there are two logos for fellowships: the "MUKHTAR A. SHEIKH HOSPITAL FELLOWSHIP" logo, which includes a stylized white flower icon and the text "FIENS MUKHTAR A. SHEIKH HOSPITAL FELLOWSHIP", and the "BASSETT FELLOWSHIP" logo, which includes a stylized white atom icon and the text "FIENS BASSETT FELLOWSHIP". To the right of these logos is a circular portrait of Dr. Rabia Saleem, a woman wearing a blue patterned headscarf. Below her portrait is the text "Dr. Rabia Saleem Mukhtar A. Sheikh Hospital Fellow". At the bottom of the graphic, there are three circular portraits of men in white lab coats or suits. From left to right, they are Dr. Teuku Arie Hidayat (Bassett Fellow), Dr. Jeremiah Omoro (Bassett Fellow), and Dr. Dumura Jeneral Alfin (Bassett Fellow). Each name and title is printed in white text directly below their respective portrait.

# 2024 FELLOWS

**FIENS MUKHTAR A. SHEIKH HOSPITAL FELLOWSHIP**

**FIENS BASSETT FELLOWSHIP**

**Dr. Rabia Saleem**  
Mukhtar A. Sheikh  
Hospital Fellow

**Dr. Teuku Arie Hidayat**  
Bassett Fellow

**Dr. Jeremiah Omoro**  
Bassett Fellow

**Dr. Dumura Jeneral Alfin**  
Bassett Fellow