



RAGAMS Connect

*Bringing the world together to improve the quality of life
of those affected by MS and to end MS forever*

Singapore Convention May 25-29, 2024

- Shankar Subramanian, India Chair, attended the convention and manned the Exhibition Booth.
- His first Convention provided opportunity to experience and meet with international Rotarians



Australia

- January 07, 2024 and June 30, 2024 Rotary Club of Gisborne manned the Bunning Sausage sizzle facility for RAGAMS and local community fund raising.
- Diana and Martin Taurins attended D9800 conference held Bendigo in April 12-14, 2024 and manned the RAGAMS Exhibition Booth which provided the opportunity to display upgraded promotional banners and materials which attracted conference attendees.
- RC of Gisborne, RAGAMS and Australian Rotary Health Jacob Taurins Memorial PHD Scholarship was awarded to Mr. Zhe (Darren) by Australian Rotary Health.

The following is the project summary of the PhD, started in February 2024:

Biomarkers of Personalized Therapy for Multiple Sclerosis Investigating at Melbourne University

PROJECT SUMMARY

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is the second most common cause of disability in young adults, and is associated with significant societal costs. It is a challenging autoimmune condition characterized by episodic inflammation that may lead to secondary neurodegeneration in the central nervous system (CNS). Twenty therapies are presently available for treatment of this inflammation, but

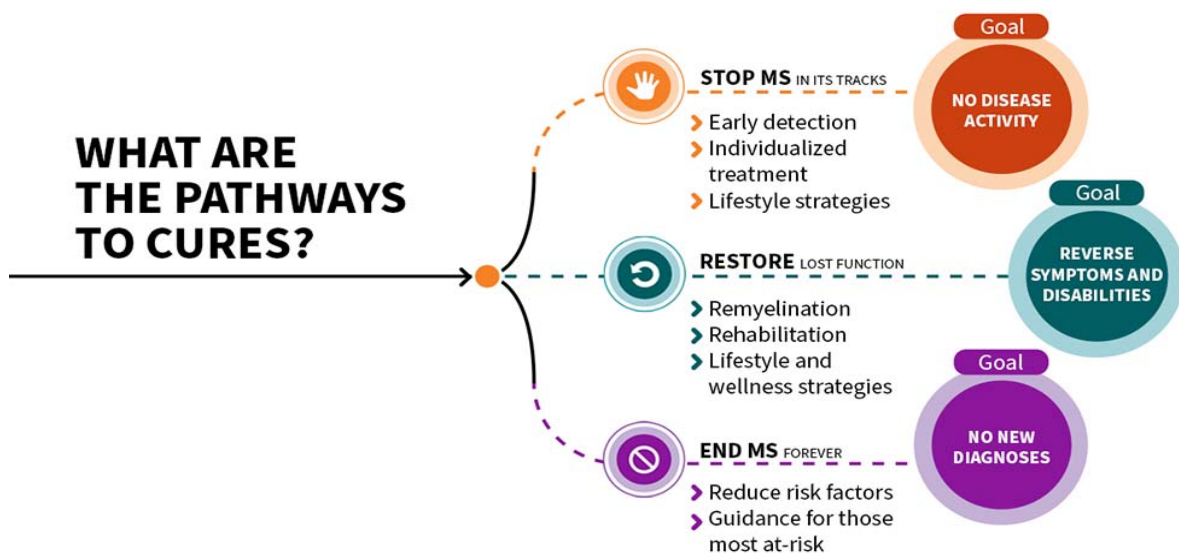


individual response to each of these therapies is highly variable. Timely initiation of the right disease-modifying therapy (DMT) is the cornerstone of successful therapeutic management as it plays a critical role in preventing further worsening of disability.

Despite recent advances in MS pharmacotherapy, disability prevention in patients has remained challenging and often suboptimal. This gap between the capabilities of the presently available therapies and the at-times suboptimal individual response to therapy is often attributed to the lack of understanding of factors that predispose individuals with MS to be good or suboptimal

responders to concrete DMTs. Recent research has highlighted the potential of predictive algorithms that integrate clinical and biological data to guide treatment decisions in MS.

This doctoral research endeavours to propel the field forward by developing an enhanced predictive algorithm - "Crystal Ball 2.0." This innovative algorithm integrates builds on its first version, which demonstrated that individual response to the commonly used DMTs can be predicted, albeit to a limited extent, based on patients' clinical and demographic characteristics. During this PhD, I will further develop this predictive algorithm



by incorporating novel biomarkers, aiming to augment the precision of predicting individual responses to DMTs. The study is a collaborative, multi-site effort spanning Australia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic. Leveraging diverse cohorts and advanced statistical techniques, the project will refine the first version of the Crystal Ball predictive model of individual treatment response by:

- (i) standardising the predictive algorithm so that it can be applied in a general clinical setting
- (ii) exploring causal effects of therapies in individuals (in place of reporting mere associations)

(iii) incorporating novel candidate biological markers of response to MS therapy (brain MRI, concentration of vitamin D in the blood and concentration of neurofilament light chain [a product of neuronal breakdown] in the blood), and assessing the generalisability of the algorithm in additional cohorts.

The overarching objective is to facilitate more accurate and effective personalized therapy for individuals with MS. The project seeks to mitigate worsening of disability and thus elevate the overall quality of life among people living with MS through precision-led choice of MS therapy.

This project scope and candidate fit perfectly within international MS Community goals.

Rotary International Convention: RAGAMS Participation

The recently concluded Rotary International Convention in Singapore provided an invaluable platform for the Rotary Action Group against Multiple Sclerosis (RAGAMS) to raise awareness and drive action towards combating Multiple Sclerosis (MS). As a representative of RAGAMS, I had the privilege of engaging



with Rotarians from diverse regions, discussing the critical issues surrounding MS, and highlighting the need for increased involvement in this cause.

During the convention, it became evident that awareness about RAGAMS is relatively low among Rotarians. Many attendees were surprised to learn about the existence of an exclusive action group dedicated to MS. This gap in awareness underscores the

necessity for more robust communication and outreach efforts to ensure that Rotarians worldwide are informed about RAGAMS and its mission.

Engaging with Rotarians from different parts of the world revealed a universal recognition of the importance of addressing MS.

However, the level of active participation and support varies significantly across regions.

The convention highlighted the need for a more coordinated global effort to:

1. Increase Membership and Participation:

- Encourage more Rotary clubs and districts to join RAGAMS.
- Foster partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders committed to the cause of MS.
- Organize informational sessions and workshops to educate Rotarians about MS and the role of RAGAMS.



2. Support Research and Advocacy:

- Advocate for increased funding and resources for MS research.
- Promote collaboration between research institutions and Rotary clubs to support innovative projects aimed at finding a cure for MS.
- Lobby for policy changes and initiatives that benefit individuals affected by MS.

3. Drive Community Support:

- Implement support programs for people living with MS, focusing on improving their quality of life.
- Facilitate access to medical care, rehabilitation, and other essential services.
- Organize community events and campaigns to raise awareness and reduce the stigma associated with MS.



The Rotary International Convention in Singapore was a significant opportunity for RAGAMS to enhance its visibility and forge new partnerships. The interactions with Rotarians underscored the urgent need for a more inclusive and coordinated approach to tackling MS.

Moving forward, it is imperative to expand our outreach efforts, support research endeavours, and drive community support initiatives. By doing so, RAGAMS can make a meaningful impact in the fight against Multiple Sclerosis and improve the lives of those affected by this debilitating condition.

I urge all Rotarians to get involved with RAGAMS, spread the word within their communities, and contribute to our collective efforts in combating MS. Together, we can make a difference and move closer to a world free from the challenges posed by Multiple Sclerosis.

Let's join hands to create a world where MS is a challenge of the past.



Prepared by: Diana, Martin and Shankar