They have dedicated their lives to cancer research

P RAJENDRAN

Eight researchers, two of them veterans, were honored at the 23rd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Indian Scientists in Cancer Research in New Orleans.

Dr Aniruddha Ganapathy, founder and current president, said that AAISCR supports cancer researchers by connecting scientists to help them pursue common goals, network, share knowledge and expertise, and by mentoring particularly young investigators.

Dr Sankar Mitra, professor at the Houston Methodist Hospital and Research Institute, received a Lifetime Achievement Award for many of his fundamental discoveries in the area of repair of DNA damage.

Dr Raju S K Chapanti, professor at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York, received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his studies on the genetics of human cancer, focusing on leukemia, B-cell lymphoma, and adult male granulose cell tumors.

These awards are given to scientists who’ve made fundamental contributions to cancer research either through a single scientific discovery or a body of work, and must have had a lasting impact on cancer research and demonstrated a lifetime commitment to progress against cancer.

Two researchers won the AAISCR Outstanding Scientist Award, which recognizes novel and significant biomedical research that has led to important contributions in basic and translational cancer research, cancer diagnosis, cancer prevention, or treatment of patients with cancer.

Dr Adhip P N Majumdar, professor at Wayne State University School of Medicine, Michigan, was awarded for his contributions in elucidating the pathophysiology of age-related changes in the gut, specifically those which lead to the development of cancer.

Dr Shivendra Singh, professor at University of Pittsburgh, was awarded for his contributions in prostate cancer prevention research.

In the Postdoctoral Fellow/Junior Faculty category, Dr Girijesh K Patel of University of South Alabama was awarded for his research presentation on how pancreatic cancer cells develop resistance to chemotherapy, and Dr Suryavathi Viswanadhapalli of University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio for her research presentation on the role PELP1, a gene that if mutated can cause cancer, plays in breast cancer drug resistance.

AAISCR also rewards young investigators’ (junior faculty, postdoctoral fellow and graduate student) excellence in research. This year’s Young Investigator Awards were presented to two graduate students for research presented at the American Association for Cancer Research annual meeting in New Orleans.

Saswati Karmakar was recognized for her work on how interacting proteins associated with cell differentiation can feed the self-renewal of ovarian cancer stem cells. Supriti Gupta was recognized for his work on changes seen in some peptides that are usually associated with blood pressure — and the receptors they link to — in pancreatic cancer. Both are graduate students at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha.

Dancing for a cause

The Natyamani School of Dance in Westborough, Massachusetts, an institution for Bharata Natyam in New England, is hosting its annual festival of music and dance, Naada Nritiya Sammelana, in Ashland, MA, May 22 as a fundraiser for Akshaya Patra.

The day-long festival will feature a Carnatic vocal recital by students of the Anuvahva School of Music, Framingham, MA, followed by a Bharata Natyam performance, Shivapriya, and directed by Natyamani’s artistic director Sridevi Ajai Thirumalai. The funds raised from the ticket sales will go towards Akshay Patra’s cause of feeding 1.4 million school children in India every day.

Earlier, Rubashruti Kanna, a sophomore at Edgemont high school in Westchester County, New York, used the platform of her arangetram to raise money for Animal Rahat (an animal welfare organization in India), Smile Train and American Forests.

Rubashruti, who is a member of the zero waste initiative team at the Greenbriugh Nature Center in Scarsdale, NY, and the Edgemont Green Team which is spearheading the compost initiative in the high school, feels passionately about the concept of reducing trash and increasing composting, and she made efforts to make her arangetram a sustainable event.

The Sringeri Vidya Bharati Foundation, Inc performed a ground breaking ceremony in San Diego, California, this month, to establish its Western Center, which will house a traditional Sringeri Shankara Mutt and a Sri Sharadamba temple.

Like Sri Adi Shankara-charaya (in the 8th century AD) established four centers of Vedic wisdom (Amnaya Peethas) in India, the chairman of SVBF, Dr Yegnasubramanian took on the task of establishing Amnaya Mathas on four sides of the US. SVBF had already established its Eastern Center near the Grand Poconos in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania.

Work on the other three mutts is in progress in Detroit (Northern Center), Houston (Southern Center) and San Diego (Western Center).

The land in San Diego, a 19.5-acre site near the San Diego Safari Park, was acquired on Vijaya Dasami last year. Located in the picturesque San Pasqual Valley, it is surrounded by mountains and orange groves, vineyards and avocado farms. The location of the proposed temple is close to all parts of San Diego, Carlsbad, Los Angeles, Irvine and Riverside.

NEWS IN BRIEF

A Sringeri Shankara Mutt in San Diego

Dada Vaswani’s special advice: Stay true to your roots

When someone asked about ending terrorism, he stressed the importance of stopping the killing of the animals.

The spiritual leader was visiting the Bay Area after nine years. Speaking to India Abroad on the sidelines of the event, he said his message to the community was: “Stay true to your roots.”

“(Most of the world) has forgotten god,” he added. “They have thrown gods from their homes and from educational institutions. These are the two centers of character building.” He felt the new generation was growing without character and the consequences would be difficult to manage.

M R Rangaswami, founder, Indiaspora, who invited Vaswani to the Bay Area, told India Abroad that he decided to do so after he saw the impact the spiritual leader had at the Indiaspora retreat in Virginia last year: “Dada is a radiant, beautiful soul, who likes to give to others selflessly. His smile is infectious and his words simple but profound.”

“He is humble and modest beyond belief. Who else would have a biography titled Gurus of None, Disciple of All,” Rangaswami added.

Devotees seek blessings from ‘Dada’ J P Vaswani.