

# Catching Up with Robert D. Sanders, BSc, MBBS, PhD, FRCA

The ASA Monitor sat down with Dr. Sanders, a key opinion leader in anesthesiology, for his insights on the specialty. Dr. Sanders is the recipient of the 2020 James E. Cottrell, MD, Presidential Scholar Award, which is presented each year to an ASA member whose career focuses on research. He is the current Nuffield Chair of Anaesthetics at Sydney Medical School/Central Clinical School and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Australia.

**ASA Monitor:** From your clinical and research training at Imperial College London to your recent appointment as Nuffield Chair of Anaesthetics at the University of Sydney, Australia, how has your international career shaped your approach to health care?

**Dr. Sanders:** I think most of the challenges and opportunities in health care

are the same the world over, but there are major differences in local cultures and practices. I think flexibility and communication are key. Ultimately, we're all focused on the same ambition: improving outcomes for the patients we treat. There are advantages and disadvantages to every system I have worked in, but I am fortunate enough to have worked with great colleagues who strive to provide the best care.

**ASA Monitor:** You've already published more than 40 scholarly articles. Why is it important to you to contribute to the anesthesiology specialty's body of literature?

**Dr. Sanders:** First, anesthesia is fascinating. The efficacy of our medicines and the benefits they can bring to patients are amazing. Second, I think we can still do better. I want to help define a knowledge base to support advances in health care and anesthesiology through innovative

discovery and dispelling dogma that may restrain our specialty.

**ASA Monitor:** What do you perceive as the most exciting opportunity for the specialty today?

**Dr. Sanders:** Internationally, anesthesia has developed major roles in perioperative care and the holistic approach to the patients undergoing surgery. I think anesthesiologists are increasingly recognized in this role and this supports a broader remit in health care for our specialty. I think our grounding in basic science and our knowledge of diverse organ systems means we have valuable perspectives in many varied health conditions. This should be the foundation for the academic success of our specialty.

**ASA Monitor:** What do you believe will be the greatest challenge facing the anesthesiology specialty in the next decade?



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**Dr. Sanders:** In my five years in the United States, I witnessed continued erosion of the support for the academic basis of the specialty. If academic anesthesia fails, the specialty will undoubtedly dwindle and become sidelined.

**ASA Monitor:** What advice would you offer a medical student who has chosen a career in anesthesiology?

**Dr. Sanders:** Anesthesia is an incredibly rewarding career, but stressful too. Look after yourself and find joy in your work.

To learn more about Robert D. Sanders, BSc, MBBS, PhD, FRCA, read the announcement of the 2020 James E. Cottrell, MD, Presidential Scholar Award in the November issue of the ASA Monitor. ■

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