



SURGEON with a mission

In 1890, American diarist Alice James commented: "I suppose one has a greater sense of intellectual degradation after an interview with a doctor than from any human experience."

Words by Emma Slater

I was recently fortunate enough to hold an interview with one of the country's finest consultant surgeons, Mr Sanjiv Jari, and while the term 'intellectual degradation' is dramatic, I am certainly able to empathise with James' sentiments. Mr Jari's wealth of experience, together with his moral integrity and tremendous pioneering spirit, is awe-inspiring to say the least. His qualifications, including a BSc (Hons) in Anatomy and a Sports Medicine Fellowship Diploma from the University of Indiana, are remarkable. However, more impressive still is his commitment – a commitment not only to his primary occupation as NHS orthopaedic surgeon at Hope Hospital, but also to his management of, and tireless work for, his self-created and nationally renowned Sports Medicine Clinic.

"The clinic came about through my experience working for a year at a top US Sports Medicine Facility," explains Mr Jari. "The way athletes are treated there – and I use the term 'athlete' loosely, as it encompasses not only elite and professional athletes but anyone with a sporting injury – is very different to how they are treated in the UK. Many American surgeons have very specialist interests: knee injuries will be seen by a knee surgeon; shoulder injuries will be seen by a shoulder surgeon, and so on. Over here, many surgeons call themselves sports medicine doctors, but their tendency is to general rather than specialist orthopaedics. I felt that the US system had far more potential for benefiting our athletes, so I formed the Manchester Sports Medicine Clinic.

"All patients are treated in order to get them back on their feet as soon as possible, whether they are a 70-year-old lady who has had a hip replacement, or a Premiership football player recovering from knee surgery. I would like to see the US specialist-type option available on the NHS, and I endeavour to incorporate American techniques into my work with public health. Unfortunately, the Government has made a decision that means in essence sports medicine is not going to be specifically offered in the NHS. I guess that decision has come round due to financial constraints, but it's something that really may disadvantage people with sports injuries who cannot afford private medicine."

Mr Jari is also acutely dedicated to his work with medical charities; indeed, following the devastating earthquake in Pakistan in October 2005, he became part of the Mobile International Surgical Teams (MIST), and travelled to Al-Shaffer Hospital in the north east of the country, performing desperately needed operations for earthquake victims. However, he found that providing aid was easier said than done:

"We met with President Musharaf, and other high-ranking officials. Explaining to them that what we were trying to do was for the benefit of their people was extremely difficult. In Pakistan, the population was, and still is, suffering and dying as a result of the earthquake. However, when you've got political issues in the background, it's very difficult for charitable organisations to be heard, and to progress."

Nevertheless, MIST was able to provide invaluable medical assistance for hundreds of earthquake victims. In addition, Mr Jari has performed charitable operations in Egypt, and future plans involve joint replacement surgery in India and Sudan.

And what does this man of many talents value most? "My wife, Jennifer, and my two beautiful daughters, Hemma and Priya," he says.