

Dilip V. Jeste, M.D., 139th President, 2012–2013

Carolyn B. Robinowitz, M.D.

President Jeste, President-Elect Lieberman, past presidents, Board of Trustees, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen, “Chance favors the prepared mind.” That saying is particularly apt in considering the challenges and opportunities that have marked Dr. Jeste’s tenure as APA president. Each APA president has been confronted by issues particular to our profession, such as stigma, antipsychiatry groups, insufficient access to care, funding for research and education. None have complained of having too few challenges during their tenure. But this year has been extraordinary. Dr. Jeste has taken on several major tasks, any one of which could occupy a presidential year, and all have considerable impact on our Association, not only for a year, but for decades.

Recognizing the potential impact of Jay Scully’s retirement at the end of this year, Dr. Jeste appointed a search committee composed of a diverse group of members, chaired by Past President Paul Appelbaum and charged to conduct a wide search to identify potential candidates. Dilip set a timeline that allowed the identification of an excellent successor who could work collaboratively for some months with our Medical Director/CEO to ensure a seamless and successful transition.

The DSM process provides another example. It has been almost two decades since the publication of the previous edition, and the process for the development of DSM-5 was extensive, involving hundreds of researchers and clinicians. (In fact, Dilip himself participated in the study of the research agenda for DSM-5 published in 2007.) The work involved online review and comments from thousands of scientists, as well as interested lay people from around the world. As the final report was being completed, Dilip became the conductor of this great symphony (resembling *Mahler’s 9th?*), ensuring that the process would not lag while also ensuring that each recommendation was carefully reviewed by leaders in the Association, and that there would be appropriate educational materials and programs for its use so that this transition too would be seamless.

When the implementation of the AMA’s new CPT code resulted in particularly bad behavior on the part of insurance companies denying patients and clinicians appropriate access to and reimbursement for care, Dilip led the Board beyond outraged rhetoric to aggressive

action, filing suit demonstrating that we will not tolerate such discrimination.

What was the background and experience that prepared our president for these and other challenges?

Dilip grew up in a small town in India and was the first physician in his family. A bookworm, as a teenager he read voraciously and was particularly taken by Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams*, as well as books for lay readers on human behavior. He was fascinated by mystery fiction, especially Agatha Christie, detection, and problem solving.

He entered medical school in Pune when he was 17 and studied the mysteries of the body—and then the mysteries of the mind as a psychiatry resident in Mumbai. He viewed the United States, through books and movies, as a mecca, but this vision was tempered by the reality of his first assignment in Newark, New Jersey, a challenging and stressful environment in a less than welcoming culture, clearly a different and less romantic picture than *West Side Story*. He went on to residency at Cornell, training in neurology at George Washington, and a neuroscience research fellowship at NIH. His New York and NIH mentors and colleagues were a “who’s who” of psychiatric leaders. His wife Sonali completed training and work in child psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, while Dilip drove between Rockville and St. Elizabeth’s Hospital, taking their daughters (Shafali and Neelum) to school and activities. But Washington could not compete with the research opportunities offered by Lew Judd at UCSD. There, Dilip has multiple leadership roles: an endowed chair, Distinguished Professor, Director of Geriatric Psychiatry, director of an institute for research on aging, and director of an innovation center.

His scientific accomplishments are outstanding and world class—broad and deep, almost 600 articles, books, and chapters integrating neurobiological discoveries with psychosocial aspects of adaptation and coping—from psychosis in the elderly to successful aging. His publications are important. He has been listed by the Institute for Scientific Information as one of the world’s most cited authors, an elite group comprising less than one-half of 1% of all publishing researchers of the past two decades, and was elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. Just listing his national and international accolades and awards would take more than my allotted time. And in addition to being a continuously funded NIH distinguished scientist, he has been a generative mentor ensuring the development of young scientists. Work is doing what he loves—a different kind of detective work, trying to understand the interesting, exciting, and most complicated computer in the world.

And his work meshes closely with his personal life and indeed his personality.

Dilip and Sonali are particularly proud of their daughters, who have followed in their parents' footsteps, becoming physicians contributing to discovery and clinical excellence in autism research and care and in pediatric oncology. Dilip and Sonali ensure that his demanding travel schedule allows time for family visits with their grandchildren.

His own experience as an immigrant, as well as the experiences of his wife and daughters, is reflected in his intense commitment to diversity and inclusiveness and his outreach to members of underrepresented groups. And he listens—carefully, thoughtfully, and critically—wanting to have the best information prior to making a decision.

Respectful of others' input and opinions, he is not swayed by fads, fashion, or inappropriate emotion, careful to consider what might be unintended negative consequences, always protective of the Association and the field.

One of the tenets of leadership is that if no one is angry at you, you must be doing something wrong. Yet it is a

reflection of Dilip's remarkable modesty, warmth, and other-directedness that he has earned and maintained the deep esteem and admiration of colleagues at all levels.

APA has been favored through the chance and timing of elections. How fortunate we have been to have a leader of his wisdom, strength, and determination to complete the important tasks and to pave the way not only for his successor as president, but for the future of our Association and our profession.

Please join me in welcoming and congratulating President Dilip Jeste.

Presented at the 166th Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, San Francisco, May 18–22, 2013. Dr. Robinowitz is 134th President of the American Psychiatric Association, Special Associate Provost for Health Sciences at George Washington University, Washington, DC, and former Dean of the Georgetown University School of Medicine, Washington, DC. She is currently in private practice of adult, child, and adolescent psychiatry. Address correspondence to Dr. Robinowitz, 5225 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20015; carolynrobinowitz@usa.net (e-mail).
