



GUEST EDITORIAL | SJIP 2026

Genesis and Progression of South Asian Association of Physiologists (2007-2025)

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The South Asian Association of Physiologists (SAAP) is a not-for-profit professional organization committed to the advancement of physiological sciences in education, research, development, and healthcare in the region. In 2007, Dr. Arif Siddiqui, Aga Khan University, Pakistan, contacted his colleagues, namely, Dr. Muhammad Aslam and Dr. H.R. Ahmad from Pakistan, Dr. Kusal K. Das, Dr. Mohammad Fahim, Dr. Amar K. Chandra and Dr. Shyamal Roy Choudhury from India, Dr. Savithri Wimalasekera and Dr. Sharaine Fernando from Sri Lanka and floated the concept to form a professional body in South Asia. The group consented to transform the founding group into an ad hoc committee to pursue the objective.

Subsequently, Dr. Arif Siddiqui was invited to the Annual Conference of Physiological Society of India (PSI) in Faridabad, India where a special meeting was convened on 7th December, 2007 by Dr. Gulshan Khanna, the organizer of PSI's Annual Meeting and was attended by senior physiologists from different universities/medical colleges from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The meeting consented to move forward with the establishment of SAAP and Dr. Arif Siddiqui was given the mandate to approach all the physiological societies of the South Asian countries and was charged to draft the Association's by-laws. After exchange of feedback and input, the draft document took shape in January, 2008.

In accordance with the decision of the ad hoc Steering Committee, the First Biennial Conference of SAAP was held from 14-16 November, 2008 at Shifa College of Medicine, Islamabad. Over 400 delegates participated from across Pakistan and 16 from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Iran. The theme of the conference was *Updates in Physiology: Trends, Opportunities and Challenges*. The Second Biennial Conference of SAAP was organized from 15-17 December, 2010 at St. John's Medical College, Bangalore, India. The theme of the conference was *Rediscovering Physiology in the Post-Genomic Era*. The Third Biennial Conference of SAAP was conducted from 7-10 November, 2012 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The theme of the conference was *Advances in Physiology: Trends and Opportunities*. The Fourth Biennial Conference of SAAP was held from 5-7 December, 2014 at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The theme of the conference was *Advancement of Physiology from Research to Clinical Practice*. The Fifth Biennial

Conference of SAAP was organized from 10-12 December, 2016 at Kathmandu University, Nepal. The theme of the conference was *Redefining Health in Nature*. The Sixth Biennial Conference of SAAP was organized from 13-15 December, 2018 at University College of Medicine & Dentistry, University of Lahore, Pakistan. The theme of the conference was *Enhancing Research Collaboration in South Asia*. The Seventh Virtual Biennial Conference of SAAP was conducted from 23-25 March, 2021 at Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, New Delhi, India. It was arranged virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The theme of the conference was *Physiological Sciences for Betterment of Health*. The Eighth Biennial Conference of SAAP was held from 11-13 November, 2022 at Colombo, Sri Lanka. The theme of the conference was *Fostering Trans-disciplinary Learning for Better Healthcare*. The Ninth Biennial Conference of SAAP was organized from 6-8 December, 2024 at University of Lahore, Pakistan. The theme of the conference was *Physiology with Inter-disciplinary Integration*. The Tenth Biennial Conference of SAAP will be held from 30 October - 1 November, 2026 at Bangladesh Medical University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The theme of the conference is *Integrative Physiology: From Laboratory Insights to Extreme Adaptation*. It is heartening to learn that the process of learning through deliberations at the conferences was not missed over the cycle from 2008 to 2024 in spite of the COVID pandemic, for which the SAAP leadership deserves a big applause.

The genesis of the SAAP Bulletin took place in January, 2020 to create scholarly communication and academic visibility among physiologists across South Asia. The founding Editor-in-Chief of the SAAP *Bulletin* was Prof. Piyusha Milani Atapattu under whose leadership (January 2020 - January 2023), a vibrant academic forum publishing updates, conference reports, perspectives, society's news and the like was established in a professional manner. Editorial leadership subsequently transitioned to Dr. Kaushik Bharati who assumed office as the second Editor-in-Chief of the SAAP *Bulletin* in April, 2023. Under his guidance, the SAAP *Bulletin* sustained its publication trajectory and further consolidated its academic scope and organizational relevance. The strategic progression culminated in the transformation of the Bulletin into a full-fledged research journal, named as SAAP *Journal of Integrative Physiology (SJIP)*. SJIP is envisioned as a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to advancing integrative physiology, encompassing

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molecular, cellular, systemic, clinical and translational dimensions of the discipline, as well as allied health sciences. Dr. Kaushik Bharati serves as the founding Editor-in-Chief of SJIP. We are confident to get it indexed regionally and globally in the years ahead.

The SAAP has proceeded well but has to progress for academic and research collaboration in the form of student-faculty exchange, joint research projects, thematic research groups, joint publication and exchange of thesis reviews and examinership, both at the under- and postgraduate levels across South Asia. Physiological societies in

Maldives, Bhutan and Afghanistan (located in South Asia) are non-existent. There is a need to launch these professional bodies in these countries to complete the loop. The SJIP has to go through an uphill process for its validation, indexation and visibility, globally. We are confident that with the sustained efforts collectively, we will reach there, *"Together, we can achieve extra-ordinary"*. We need to strengthen our scholarly interactive relations with the Federation of Asian and Oceanian Physiological Societies (FAOPS) and the International Union of Physiological Sciences (IUPS) in a meaningful way.