



Robert C. Meisterling Orator's Award

Dr. Meisterling's dedication to the treatment of sports-related injuries is being recognized

By Darcy LaDue-Vargas

The Robert C. Meisterling Orator's Award is presented annually to a Hennepin County Medical Center sports medicine fellow. In 1987, Dr. Rob Johnson established the Hennepin County Medical Center Primary Care Sports Medicine Fellowship Program in Minneapolis, MN. This fellowship program is a one year program for primary care residents. The purpose of the program is to train family physicians in the diagnosis and treatment of sports injuries. Completed in the year following their residency program, the fellowship program provides them with knowledge in the sports medicine approach to sports related injuries. With their specialized training, these primary care doctors are able to evaluate and treat many orthopaedic conditions. The clinic-based fellowship provides residents with unique opportunities to learn expertise with musculoskeletal exams and treating sports-related conditions. They gain knowledge in conservative treatment options and when to refer a patient to an orthopaedic specialist.

For over twenty years, this program has been a leader in sports medicine fellowship programs in the country. Recently, the University of Minnesota and Methodist Hospital/ Park Nicollet Health Services joined HCMC to contribute to the fellowship. Four sports medicine fellows are trained each year.

Since the program's beginnings, Dr. Meisterling has been extremely dedicated to this fellowship program. Dr. Meisterling has spent considerable time and energy sharing his sports medicine expertise with the family medicine specialty and promoting the kind of approach and treatment skills that can benefit patients

with these injuries. He completed his own sports medicine fellowship at Hughston Orthopaedic Clinic in Columbus, GA. "The HCMC Primary Care Sports Medicine Fellowship Program was an opportunity to influence my profession and give back," commented Dr. Meisterling. Not only has Dr. Meisterling provided solid orthopaedic teaching for over 60 fellows over the years, but St. Croix Orthopaedics also provides financial support for continuing medical education experiences for the program's fellows.

The Robert C. Meisterling Orator's Award, which is fully funded by Balu Natarajan, M.D., was designed to commemorate the fellowship's rich past, and to encourage current fellows to carry on the legacy of the fellowship in a national forum. Dr. Natarajan, who graduated from the fellowship program in 2000, is now practicing sports medicine at Chicago Sports MD in Chicago, IL. "St. Croix Orthopaedics was a big part of my fellowship experience," said Dr. Natarajan. "I still use on a daily basis what I learned from Dr. Meisterling."

During his fellowship, Dr. Natarajan observed that many of the sports medicine fellowship programs around the country had fellows presenting at the Annual American Medical Society for Sports Medicine (AMSSM) Meeting. "Our program was no less knowledgeable," he recalled. "I felt it was important for other people to see the great work being produced from this fellowship program. The purpose of this award is to motivate our fellows to shine a little more on a national scope, to show our appreciation of the contributions of past faculty, and to foster a sense of responsibility among current fellows to contribute to the efforts of future fellows."

The \$500 award is gifted to a fellow who is speaking at the AMSSM Annual



Balu Natarajan, M.D.

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Meeting. It helps defray some of the costs associated with travel to the annual meeting. Past winners of the award include Heather Cichanowski, MD, 2005, Michelle Gorman McNerney, MD, 2008, Saul McBroom, MD, 2008, and Amy Oldenburg, MD, 2009. The 18th Annual American Medical Society for Sports Medicine (AMSSM) Meeting was held April 25-29, 2009, in Tampa, FL.

"I am honored and delighted to learn of the Robert C. Meisterling Orator's Award," remarked Dr. Meisterling. "I have enjoyed the time I have spent with each of the fellows and feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to help guide the future of sports medicine. I appreciate the commitment of Dr. Natarajan to the HCMC fellowship and commend him on the inspiration he is to future fellows."

Dr. Balu Natarajan began his solo practice in 2003. He serves on the Medical Team of the Chicago Marathon and has extensive experience with patients preparing for endurance events. He also serves as team physician for the Chicago Storm and traveled to Brazil with the US World Cup Beach Soccer Team. He was born in Chicago and is, himself, a runner and recreational athlete.

Dr. Robert Meisterling co-founded St. Croix Orthopaedics, P.A. in 1978. He received his medical degree from Creighton University in 1972. Dr. Meisterling completed residencies in orthopaedic surgery at the University of Minnesota Hospitals, the Veteran's Administration, Gillette Children's Hospital and Shriner's Hospital. He completed a Sports Medicine Fellowship at Hughston Orthopaedic Clinic, Columbus, GA. Dr. Meisterling was a team physician and consultant for high school, college, and professional athletic teams, including the Kansas City Chiefs. He and colleagues from St. Croix Orthopaedics have been the team physicians for the St. Paul Saints for 15 years. Dr. Meisterling retired from active practice at St. Croix Orthopaedics in December 2008. □

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