

## **Interview Assessment #18**

**Name of Professional:** Dr. Bharathy Sundaram

**Profession/Title:** Neurology Specialist for Neurodegenerative Diseases

**Business/Company name:** Baylor Scott & White Medical Center

**Date of Interview:** February 8th, 2021

### **Assessment:**

In this research interview, I interviewed Dr. Bharathy Sundaram. Dr. Sundaram is a neurology specialist who is affiliated with Baylor Scott & White Medical Center. In specific, she specializes in neurodegenerative diseases and dementia in neurology. Initially, for this research interview, I hoped to learn more about dementia and neurodegenerative diseases, primarily Parkinson's Disease, which is my focus in ISM. I had previously interviewed Dr. Greenberg, who specializes in autoimmune diseases/neurology; he provided me with ample information pertaining to this field, allowing me to gain further insight into this similar topic. During my interview with Dr. Sundaram, I was very excited to be given the opportunity to learn about another first-hand account of what it is like to be a doctor, in specific a neurologist, in today's era of medicine. I sought to learn about the current treatments for as well as research going into dementia. Since my goal is to determine effective early biomarkers and diagnosing methods for Parkinson's Disease, I knew that it was necessary for me to interview a professional who specializes in a similar field.

The interview started off by us discussing the difficulties and limitations of the current research and treatments for this field. Dr. Sundaram explained that a common misconception is that dementia itself is a disease; however, it is actually a general term pertaining to a group of conditions characterized by impairment of brain function, such as judgment and memory loss. Parkinson's and Alzheimer's Disease being two of the most prominent causes of dementia. I found this useful because prior to this, I was not aware that dementia itself was just a general term referring to many neurological conditions. Regarding the limitations of the current research and treatment for dementia, Dr. Sundaram explained that neurologists are still theorizing what the main cause of these diseases are as well as what treatments can be used for nearly 100 percent efficiency. Currently, many of the treatments are not fully effective, have many side-effects, and vary in effectiveness per patient. Most prominently, there is currently no direct cure to the majority of the diseases, leading to an increase in cases. As I learned in a past interview, patients with neurological diseases are different from patients with other diseases in that these diseases are usually not curable and have permanent as well as progressive effects, relating closely to what I learned from Dr. Sundaram.

Next, I inquired about the difficulty of her job as well as the difficulty of the path she took to get to where she is. She informed me that often times it is very difficult to have long periods of personal time due to the high demand that comes with the job; many patient's diseases do not run on your schedule, so you will have to be flexible. She also emphasized the importance of enjoying the job as it will consume much of your time. I had learned from a past interview of the difficulty of witnessing patients as their state slowly worsens; she confirmed that this was not an easy aspect of her job and that I will have to be prepared for this.