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This information is current as
of August 19, 2025.

AJNR Am J Neuroradiol 2024, 45 (8) 988-990

doi: <https://doi.org/10.3174/ajnr.A8177>

<http://www.ajnr.org/content/45/8/988>

The ASNR International Collaborations Committee: Cultivating a Global Learning Community

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ABSTRACT

SUMMARY: The American Society of Neuroradiology has expanded its global presence, driven by the efforts of the International Collaborations Committee. This committee is actively involved in training radiologists and fostering collaborations worldwide in the fields of education, research, and community service. This article explores key initiatives of the committee, such as the Anne G. Osborn ASNR International Outreach Professor Program, the International Imaging Series, and Virtual Reading Rooms. Additionally, we provide insight into recent developments related to the pandemic and outline future opportunities.

ABBREVIATIONS: ICC = International Collaborations Committee; COVID-19 = coronavirus 2019

Our American Society of Neuroradiology (ASNR) has thrived, now comprising >5800 members, with >600 residing beyond the North American borders. Figure 1 illustrates our membership statistics across different regions of the world beyond North America as of December 2023, highlighting countries that have hosted prior outreach professors.

ASNR engages in collaborations with neuroradiology partners worldwide, extending its benefits to neuroradiologists in every corner of the globe. The *American Journal of Neuroradiology* (AJNR), the official journal of the ASNR and the leading global research publication in clinical neuroradiology, provides complimentary or affordable access to individuals in developing nations through the World Health Organization's Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative program.¹ The society has also transformed into a global entity, propelling the advancement of neuroradiologic science and practice across the world by entrusting the ASNR International Collaborations Committee (ICC) with the execution of these international initiatives. This perspective summarizes the recent trends and future directions of the ICC.

While the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic temporarily paused our in-person programs, it sparked a vibrant era of

virtual collaborations, including virtual case conferences, virtual didactic lectures, and participation in the ASNR neuroradiology webinar series.

Currently, the Committee's main activities consist of the Anne G. Osborn ASNR International Outreach Professor Program, the International Imaging Series, and Virtual Reading Rooms.

Anne G. Osborn ASNR International Outreach Professor Program

The ASNR International Outreach Professor Program started in 2015 and was named after Professor Anne G. Osborn, MD, in 2017. This is a voluntary opportunity open to ASNR senior members who wish to engage in teaching activities in developing nations. This program distinguishes itself from traditional visiting professor initiatives by operating as an outreach program, with expenses shared among the ASNR outreach Professor, the ASNR organization, and the host institution in the recipient country. The program was temporarily halted in 2021 and 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but resumed in 2023. The Online Supplemental Data illustrate the host countries and outreach professors since the inception. For the 2024 program, 7 countries are participating: Argentina, Brazil (including 2 programs in Brazil), Ghana, Tanzania, Ethiopia, South Africa, and Colombia. Additional countries are likely to join in 2025.

The Anne G. Osborn ASNR International Outreach Professor Program aims to promote knowledge exchange and teaching in developing countries. The selected outreach professors are dedicated educators, adaptable to different teaching environments and audience demographics, and conduct various teaching activities during a minimum 1-week professorship. These include lectures, case reviews, teaching files, or "Workstation" sessions. The

Received November 3, 2023; accepted after revision January 4, 2024.

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Indicates article with online supplemental data.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3174/ajnr.A8177>

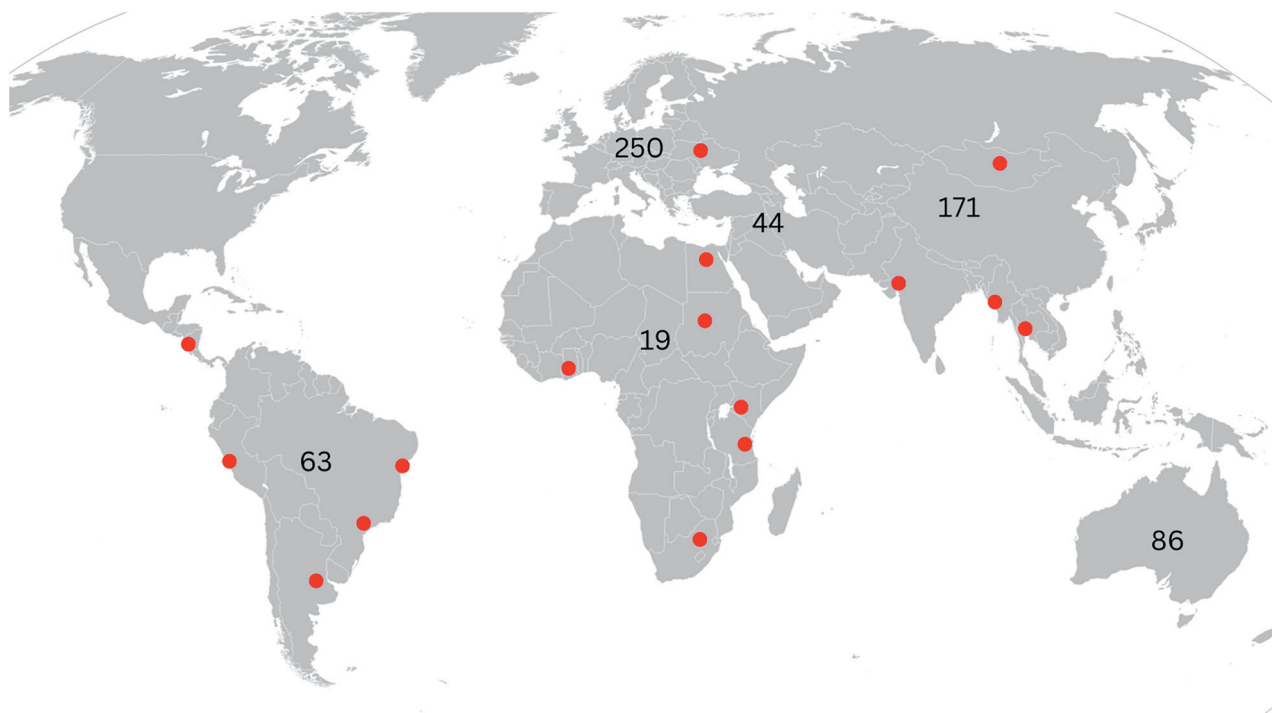


FIG 1. ASNR membership across different regions of the world: Asia, Middle East, Africa, South America, and Australia. *Red dots* highlight countries that have hosted ASNR outreach professors in the past.

program is flexible to the needs of the host country. As an example, Dr Carlos Torres worked with a large group of radiologists and radiology residents from 3 different residency programs in his 1-week visit to Yangon, Myanmar. He gave an average of 5 didactic lectures and 1 or 2 case-based presentations in a day. Dr Majid Khan gave 5 hours of talks each day followed by 2 hours of case reviews in his 1-week visit to Ghana. His lectures were in a hybrid format and attended by about 40 radiology residents and a few specialists in person, in addition to about 100 virtual attendees including other radiology residents, radiologists, head and neck surgeons, and neurosurgeons. [Figure 2](#) illustrates Dr Bruno Soares among radiology residents and radiologists in his visit to Ghana in 2017. Reports from prior outreach professors with details of their visits can be found on the ASNR website.² The ASNR supports up to 10 placements per year, with applications opening in late summer. The application emphasizes teaching skills and experience, with a preference for first-time outreach professors. Many of the outreach professors have maintained contact with the host program and are actively engaged in ongoing collaborations or mentoring of trainees and radiologists. An example is Dr Gregory Obala, who became a neuroradiology fellow at Oregon Health & Science University after meeting Dr Joshua Nickerson, Section Chief of Neuroradiology, during his visit to Kenya in 2018.

International Imaging Series

The International Imaging Series comprises educational events lasting 2–3 days held by a host country, addressing a range of neuroradiology subjects.³ This series was inaugurated in 2016 and typically convenes 1–2 times annually. The Imaging Series transitioned to a virtual format during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most speakers are senior ASNR members selected for their topic expertise and teaching abilities. They are often accompanied by local experts. ASNR members can take advantage of reduced registration fees when attending these symposia.

Previous ASNR International Imaging Series were held in the following locations:

- 2016: Bangkok, Thailand
- 2017: Singapore and Bangkok, Thailand
- 2018: Hong Kong and Cape Town, South Africa
- 2019: Fortaleza, Brazil and Kyiv, Ukraine
- 2021: (Virtual) Australia and Argentina.

For example, the inaugural 2016 International Imaging Series was held in Bangkok and included 18 talks by faculty volunteers who were invited speakers in the preceding International Society for Magnetic Resonance in Medicine meeting in Singapore. Topics included state-of-the-art imaging of stroke, traumatic brain injury, brain tumors, white matter injuries, and dementia.

ASNR Virtual Reading Rooms

The ASNR Virtual Reading Room program was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic. The concept behind this effort is to simulate a reading room environment for the host country participants, incorporating a selected ASNR representative as a guest attending in that Virtual Reading Room, free to conduct readouts of cases of the host country's selection, review challenging cases, delve into the thought process behind image interpretation, and deliver teaching points and/or didactic lectures as desired by the host country. The professor selects focus reading material and submits it to the host country 4–5 weeks before the virtual event. The host country requests that the audience submit



FIG 2. Dr Bruno Soares with his audience during his visit to Accra, Ghana in 2017.

relevant cases and questions to the selected professor 2–3 weeks ahead of the virtual session. The virtual session length is 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes.

In February 2021, the ASNR ICC and the Mongolian Society of Neuro, Head and Neck Imaging organized a successful Virtual Reading Room led by Dr Amy Juliano and moderated by Dr Bruno Policeni. More than 70 members of the Mongolian Society benefited from Dr Juliano's expertise through this interactive virtual program.

In July 2021, Drs Caroline Robson and Mai-Lan Ho presented Pediatric Epilepsy Imaging and Pediatric Head and Neck Tumors to members of the Ghana neuroradiological community.

Future Directions

The impact of the ICC extends beyond outreach programs and lectures. Numerous program participants have gone on to forge ongoing collaborations, leading to long-term projects and publications.⁴ Furthermore, several subspecialty societies, such as the American Societies of Head and Neck Radiology (ASHNR), Functional Neuroradiology (ASFNR), and Pediatric Neuroradiology (ASPNR) have either hosted or initiated international events. For instance, the ASHNR International Relations Committee in collaboration with its European counterpart has hosted quarterly webinars, including didactic and case-based lectures. It has also held a Zoom social hour with the Australian and New Zealand Society of Neuroradiology. Our international connections go beyond a common interest in neuroradiology and

extend to global health and humanitarian endeavors such as helping war victims. The ASNR made a statement in support of radiology colleagues and health care workers in Ukraine and urged its members to donate to a charity to assist with medical care to Ukrainian war victims.

In addition, the ICC looks forward to building long-term virtual collaborations beyond the activities mentioned above. The ASNR evaluates international collaboration requests from both host organizations and individual volunteers through the ASNR ICC website.⁵ Collaborative educational initiatives, including virtual case conferences, virtual didactic lectures, and virtual neuroradiology mentorship programs, can be explored for potential partnerships between ASNR and host organizations. The ICC also looks forward to collaborating with the growing number

of global health radiology programs with the aim of improving access and knowledge of imaging using both in-person and virtual formats. Engaging radiology trainees in these opportunities can help shape their careers and create future global health leaders.⁶

Disclosure forms provided by the authors are available with the full text and PDF of this article at www.ajnr.org.

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