

Delaware doc continues to wow peers

Medical group tabs Kahlon as young physician of year

BY PAUL IMBESI

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NEWARK, Del. — Dr. Glen Tinkoff, the president of the Delaware chapter of the American College of Surgeons, said he knew Dr. Randeep Kahlon was special from the start.

During an American College of Surgeons meeting a few years ago — which is usually a "gripe session" according to Tinkoff — Kahlon came in with a laptop and took notes.

Tinkoff, who is also the director of trauma at Christiana Care hospital in Newark, Del., said Kahlon was a junior member of the group at the time, and he made the other eight to 10 doctors around the table follow an agenda, made sure no one went off on a tangent, and wrote down everything that everyone said, so no one could deny it later. Tinkoff said the young Kahlon became the leader of this meeting amongst the veteran surgeons.

"This was somebody who understands how to get things done," said Tinkoff. "I was impressed. Thoroughly impressed."

Kahlon, 37, seems to have impressed other doctors in Delaware as well. In October 2005, the Medical Society of Delaware gave its annual Young Physician Award to Kahlon. In 2003, Kahlon was named Delaware's Young Surgeon of the Year by the Delaware chapter of the American College of Surgeons.

"He certainly deserves the award of being one of our best young physicians," Tinkoff said.

Kahlon is a specialist in orthopaedic surgery in the upper extremities, which means he operates on shoulders, elbows, wrists and fingers. Kahlon is a partner with First State Orthopaedics in Newark, a private practice with 13 other surgeons. Kahlon is also the Associate Chief of Orthopaedic

Trauma Service at Christiana Care hospital in Newark.

Kahlon graduated from medical school at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark, N.J. He immigrated to the United States from Punjab, India, with his parents when he was four, and he grew up in Mount Laurel, N.J.



Kahlon

Tinkoff said what separates Kahlon from other doctors in his age group is his vocalism and action.

"He's also committed to political advocacy [in medicine]," Tinkoff said. "He's more than making money. And that's important."

Kahlon's work with Christiana Care hospital is one example of how he chose patient care over money.

Christiana Care's Orthopaedic Trauma Service was below standard, Kahlon said. Kahlon's First State Orthopaedic firm is in direct competition with Christiana, but Kahlon said he helped the hospital out because he wanted to improve patient care.

"You have to do what is right for the patient, not just what's right for the bottom line," he said.

He said Christiana Care's Orthopaedic Trauma Service did not have guidelines or any kind of system set up. That changed when Kahlon and other surgeons from First State came to help out Christiana. Kahlon said the hospital was enthusiastic about their arrival, but he said he and the other First State surgeons did not do it to look good.

"This is just done to improve patient care," Kahlon said. "We recognized we had to do something above and beyond."

Above and beyond also seems to be the *modus operandi* for

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Kahlon since he began practicing in Delaware in 2000. In June 2005, for example, he became the first surgeon in the state to perform to carbon finger joint replacement.

This type of surgery was first performed at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, and it replaces the patient's arthritic finger joint with carbon. Kahlon said the surgery gives a patient increased durability in the joints.

The patient he operated on was a 33-year-old woman suffering from rheumatoid arthritis who had undergone numerous operations in the past. Kahlon said the woman now has renewed use of her fingers and can perform daily tasks like brushing her hair or teeth, which she could not do before the surgery.

Before Kahlon began practicing in Delaware, he had a fellowship in sports medicine at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio in 1999, and he was also one of the associate team doctors for the Cleveland Indians that summer.

Kahlon, who said he loved sports, helped the major league baseball club manage medical care for the entire team — like strengthening programs, rehabilitation and treating injuries.

"It was a real pleasure being involved with such skilled athletes. These guys are just very very impressive," said Kahlon.

"It was an eye-opening experience to see the amount of work ethic and the amount of talent it took to play in the major leagues."

Kahlon said the job with the Cleveland Indians was a challenge and an honor, because he was working with people whose career depended on their body parts being in top-notch condition. But, he joked, he started to get tired of going to baseball games.

"After about game 20 it got kind of mundane," he said. "I'm a baseball fan, but I never had gone to 80 games in one year."

While he was in Cleveland, Kahlon also had a fellowship in hand and upper extremity surgery at the Cleveland Clinic and Case Western Hospitals in Cleveland.

Patient care seems to be the driving force behind Kahlon.

Besides performing new surgeries and helping hospitals in direct competition with his own practice, Kahlon is politically active.

Over a year ago, Kahlon became one of 11 the founding members of the Delaware Association of Physicians of Indian Origin. Kahlon said he helped start the organization represent Indian doctors in politics, society, and education. Kahlon said there are about 200 members in the organization.

Kahlon said that his organization is not connected to the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin or any other organization — and he is in no rush to make this connection.

The reason why Kahlon wants to remain independent right now is because he wants his members to come up with new

ideas and foster them before latching on to another group and adopting its policies with little or no thought.

"It's been an absolute pleasure having [Kahlon] on our board," said Dr. Arun Malhotra, a kidney specialist at Christiana Care and St. Francis Hospital in Wilmington, Del. and a co-founder of the Delaware Association of Physicians of Indian Origin. "[Kahlon] is a wonderful facilitator and he will have a very bright road in front of him."

Malhotra said what separated Kahlon

from the other members of their organization is his insistence on establishing a mission statement before talking about membership. He said Kahlon thought it was important to know what is being created before trying to sell it.

"He's a thinker," said Malhotra.

Kahlon said he is active, especially in politics, because he believes politicians need to hear the perspective of the patient, and not just the economic bottom line. However, Kahlon said he is not involved in politics to make an eventual run for office — he is there to improve the patient's well being.

But whatever Kahlon is involved in, he tries to get people acting, instead of simply talking. "You have to get people going sometimes," he said. "I think it's very important to have an idea ... but it's more important to implement the idea."

"You have to do what is right for the patient, not just what is right for the bottom line."

**Randeep Kahlon, M.D.
partner,
First State Orthopaedics**