

## **Inaugural Address (28-12-2017)**

*(By Justice R.C. Lahoti, Former Chief Justice of India,  
On 28.12.2017 at IOACON, Indore)*

It is indeed a matter of privilege and honour for me to have been associated with the inaugural session of this conference.

A conference of professionals is an opportunity for learning, networking socializing and making friends while renewing old friendships. It is also an opportunity for relaxing, refreshing and learning new ideas, concepts and evolving techniques. Such conference enables the doctors thinking together and marching together.

Orthopedicians, as I understand, are called upon mostly to deal with injuries related to bones and joints. Such injuries may be accidental, related to sports, and defense services but a major part thereof which also call for emergency treatment are by road accidents. Taking advantage of the presence in this conference, of medicos and also such non-medicos who matter in administration, I wish to emphasize only an aspect that something urgently needs to be done about road accidents - prevention and attention.

A recent study “Cost of Trauma Care”<sup>i</sup> conducted by PGMIER(Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research), Chandigarh covering nearly 3000 patients from 6 states treated in hospitals during 2015-16 has revealed alarming facts:-

1. Road accident victims spend on an average Rs. 17,830 for medicines, procedures and other expenses;
2. Productivity loss for the injured or those who succumb to the injuries is about Rs. 33 lakhs per person on an average;
3. About 15% of Road Accident victims died within one year;
4. It is the poor who are hit the most in making out of pocket expenditure on account of accidents;
5. In more than 1/4<sup>th</sup> of road accidents cases, the families end up spending 30% or more of their total income in taking care of the patients;
6. 7 out of every 10 road crash victim’s families suffer a dip in income. 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of such families take loans to cover income loss and many are driven into poverty or debt.

7. Direct and indirect impact of road accidents costs about 3% of GDP in India.

I take this opportunity of expressing gratitude to Dr. Rajseekaran, Former President of the Indian Orthopaedic Association who filed the Public Interest Litigation<sup>ii</sup> in the Supreme Court of India highlighting several issues related with Road Accidents, their prevention and care of the victims. The Supreme Court of India has given several directions of far reaching implications and also appointed a high level committee to oversee the implementation of the directives of the court. Those who drive and walk on roads would always remember Dr. Rajseekaran and the IOA for being conscious of something which others did not notice.

Recently, on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2017 the Supreme Court has issued several directions which go to show that a Road Safety Policy has been formulated; State Road Safety Councils have been formed; Road Safety Fund has been established; Road Safety Action Plan has been prepared; District Road Safety Committees have been set up; System of Road Safety Audits is on way. Several other directions have been issued. More importantly there is a direction to have atleast one Trauma Care Centre in every district with necessary facilities and ambulance. The Supreme Court is continuing to monitor the matter and the next date appointed before the court is 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2018.

I wish to congratulate, rather felicitate Indian Orthopaedic Association and its former President Dr. S. Rajaseekaran for the great service which they have done to the country by filing Public Interest Litigation soliciting direction from the Supreme Court in the direction of curbing road accidents and caring for the victims. The petition filed before the Supreme Court was accompanied by convincing data, the statistics and concrete suggestion which have persuaded the Court to issue directions of far-reaching implications. Three and half years have passed. The directions need to be taken care of by all concerned, especially for establishing strengthening and funding of trauma centres.

There is another happy news. Indore Police has launched 'Citizen Cop', a smart phone speed alert application, which uses GPS and sensors to alert the children driving vehicles as also their parents if the speed exceeds a particular limit.<sup>iii</sup> This needs to be popularised and people need to be educated about its use and benefits.

What can be done:-

1. Drunken driving should be treated not a minor offence but equivalent to an offence of attempt to murder and should be made cognizable and punished accordingly.
2. All liquor vends should be prohibited from serving liquor to such guests as are not accompanied by drivers.
3. Police accompanied by ambulance, insurer and photographer should reach the place of accident within 3 to 5 minutes of the accident. If necessary this service can be outsourced.
4. There should be zero-tolerance for road rage as it prevents prompt medical aid.
5. Trauma centres need to be brought up and strengthened. The Government moves at a snail's speed. The IOA can volunteer and establish model trauma centres at key points throughout the country as a part of its social service initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen, before I part, I would like to pose a question to each one of you – when was the last time you sharpened your axe? Remember, if you want to progress in life, you cannot rest on your past laurels. You must continuously sharpen your axe of knowledge, skill and expertise. Happily, this Conference with Difference provides you with ample opportunity to do so.

With these words, I have pleasure in declaring the Conference inaugurated.

---

<sup>i</sup> Road Accident Victims, TOI (Times Nation), 21-12-2017

<sup>ii</sup> S. Rajasekaran v. Union of India and Ors., 2014, 6 SCC 36 (wp 295/2012, decided on 22.04.2014)

<sup>iii</sup> TOI Indore, 18-12-2017