

Our contribution to a very special cause - spreading awareness about a deadly disease.

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August 2, 2013 was a very special day in all of our lives as we had the privilege of attending the Proclamation Ceremony at the Georgia State Capitol Building wherein September was declared as the THROMBOSIS AWARENESS MONTH in Georgia. This proclamation was a direct result of the tireless efforts of the volunteers of the Georgia group of volunteers, which included Dr. Atul Laddu, MD, PhD, Mrs. Jayshree Laddu, Amruta Houde, Ameya Houde, Shubham Gupte, Ajay Houde and Anita Houde. Senator Renee Unterman of Buford, GA (District # 45) came to the help of this advocacy group and on February 1, 2013, she proposed Senate Resolution # 133. This resolution has now been accepted by the Governor of GA, Mr. Nathan Deal. The advocacy group was rapidly expanded to include all of us co-authors, with the exception of Shubham, who was part of the original group. We aim to share our experience regarding the Proclamation Ceremony and to help spread awareness for this life-threatening disease.

The evening before the ceremony, on August 1, Ajay Houde and Dr. Laddu put together a phone conference to discuss the event logistics. Among other things, we agreed on important etiquettes for the ceremony which included proper dress codes, avoidance of cell phones, etc. and we also discussed the schedule for the day. We found this call to be very useful, even though we did not realize it at that time.

All of us, including our parents, as well as Mrs. Laddu and Dr. Laddu arrived at the Georgia State Capitol building at 10.15 a.m. on August 2, 2013. We were lucky to have Ms. Erica Dour from NATF joined us in this ceremony. We were initially greeted by Laurie Sparks, the Legislative Assistant to Senator Renee Unterman. We got to see Senator Tim Golden's office and also got to sit in his chair. It was a great feeling and Laurie mentioned that we had the qualities to become a Senator ourselves, one day!

We then met Senator Renee Unterman who represents the 45th district (Buford) in GA and is incidentally the only female Republican Senator in the GA Senate. We were very fortunate to have Senator Untermann as an advocate for our cause, especially due to the fact that she is the Chairperson of the Health and Human Services Committee.

We were then escorted by Laurie to the Senate Press Conference Room in the adjacent building. There was a crew from the CBS Atlanta news organization to cover the Proclamation Ceremony. Senator Unterman gave a brief introduction about the significance of thrombotic disorders (Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and Pulmonary Embolism (PE), mentioning her own DVT condition, why there is a need for thrombosis awareness, and how Georgia will address thrombosis education by marking September as

'Thrombosis Awareness Month' in the state. Senator Unterman introduced Dr. Laddu, who explained the significance of this Resolution. Atul Laddu, MD, PhD gave an introduction and welcomed the comments of the President of NATF, Sam Goldhaber, MD, who could not be present at the ceremony due to other commitments. Dr. Goldhaber joined the group via a brilliant videotaped message, which was extremely well received. Dr. Goldhaber thanked the Georgia Advocates, Sen. Unterman, and Gov. Nathan Deal, for their efforts, and congratulated everyone on their success.

This was followed by a speech by our friend, Rajan Laddu, who happens to be Dr. Laddu's grandson. Rajan had developed PE in 2011 following back surgery. Luckily, due to prompt medical attention, Rajan survived this illness. It is due to Rajan's illness that Mrs. Laddu and Dr. Laddu got involved in this work of patient advocacy and committed themselves to the noble mission of raising the awareness of DVT / PE in the State of GA. They started working about 2 years ago with a National Organization called North American Thrombosis Forum (NATF, www.natfonline.org), in an effort to increase the awareness of these two deadly conditions in the State of GA.



At the end of the speeches and the QA session, Senator Unterman presented the Proclamation Document, signed by Georgia Governor Mr. Nathan Deal, to Dr. Atul Laddu. This was followed by a photo session. The Senator then escorted us to the Senate floor, allowed us to sit in Senator's chairs, and gave us a very interesting speech on the history and functioning of the Senate. We thoroughly enjoyed this session with the Senator as she asked us a lot of questions and gave us some invaluable information about the Senate, and the Page program, among other things .

Following the interactive session on the Senate floor, we had lunch with the distinguished guests. We reconvened in the afternoon at the Laddu residence to enjoy an evening filled with a myriad of fun filled activities that started off with video interviews by Erica Dour (from NATF, who had flown from Boston for this function) to some members of the GA group of volunteers.



From L to R: Sneha Divan, Amruta Houde, Amey Houde, Dr. Atul Laddu, Rohan Rege, Senator Renee Unterman, Rajan Laddu, Shubham Gupte, Aneesh Mirajkar, Erica Dour (NATF, Boston representative), Ritwik Sathe and Shawna Mercer.

After all the honorary guests had arrived, we engaged in delightful discussions, leading to snacks and wonderful dinner prepared by all our mothers and the host, Mrs. Laddu.

In the end, this was one "big, big, big, day" (Suzzane Collins, *Hunger Games*), for all of us young members of NATF.
