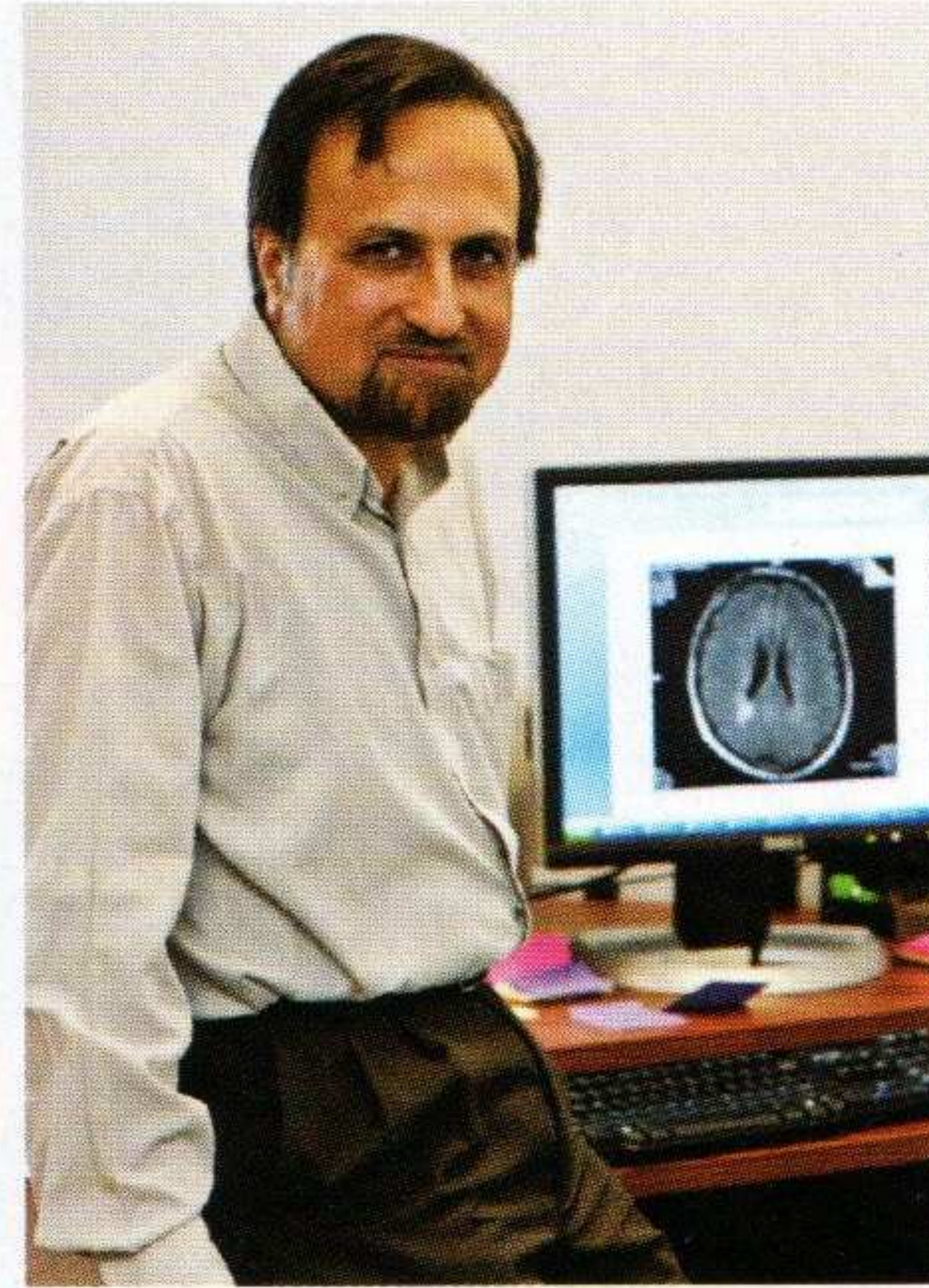


MIND MASTER

Brilliant because: His research could change the way we treat vascular dementia



NAME:

Perminder Sachdev

AGE: 54

FIELD:

Neuropsychology

AFFILIATION:

Prince of Wales Hospital

Perminder Sachdev was drawn to the often mysterious mind-brain interconnect back in the 1980s while training in psychiatry in Delhi. He noticed that psychiatric cases at the hospital where he was working could be misdiagnosed if physiological factors were ignored. For example, one patient who acted bizarrely when admitted to the emergency room was initially thought to be psychotic. "The only clue that there was something neurological was that we did a Fundus examination and there was bleeding in the retina around the optic nerve, which suggested that the patient had a subarachnoid bleed [aneurysm]," says Sachdev. "That's what convinced me that I should specialise in this borderline area between the brain and the mind."

Now the clinical director of the Neuropsychiatric Institute at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney, Sachdev sees psychiatric patients who have tumours, epilepsy, stroke damage, traumatic brain injuries, or a host of other challenges. His latest book, *The Yipping Tiger and other tales from the neuropsychiatric clinic*, explores 10 of his case studies. They include a man suffering from tics known as the "yips", which cause elite golfers to start missing simple

putts. "The book is about getting the message of neuropsychiatry out there," says Sachdev. "I try to explain why the brain generates symptoms and how."

Although he has written scholarly books before, this is his first book intended for a mass audience. But writing and literature are in his blood. While growing up in the village of Solan in the foothills of the Himalayas, he loved reading about philosophy and other subjects at the state library, while developing a scientific prowess that would one day earn him top score on the pre-med exam at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences. His unending intellectual curiosity is what continues to drive him.

Sachdev's research now concentrates on aging and cognition, including vascular dementia, which is the second greatest cause of cognitive impairment after Alzheimer's. He's especially concerned with the deterioration of small blood vessels in the brain, which he's discovered may occur as early as a person's forties.

His group is conducting four long-term studies on cognition. "Our hope is to identify the risk factors and protective factors for aging and cognitive decline."

Despite all of his accomplishments, Sachdev is not slowing down. Far from it. "The brain is the next frontier," he says. "Genetics will continue to be very important for a long time but the brain has become the major challenge for this century and it will be for a long time." —YG