

LEADERSHIP

New Methods of Reducing Pain Identified at Huntington

SURGERY, while it can improve health, mend an injury, or even save a life, can also — quite literally — be a pain. Today, however, surgery-related pain is being reduced at Huntington Hospital, thanks to important research in pain management. Neil K. Singla, MD, heads an organization that is looking at the efficacy of medications targeting postsurgical pain. Most of Dr. Singla's research takes place right here at the hospital, where he serves as director of clinical research with the department of anesthesia. Ultimately, this work is also expected to benefit non-surgical patients: "Our research involves medications aimed at acute pain after surgery," Dr. Singla explains, "but the same drugs can be used for chronic pain as well."

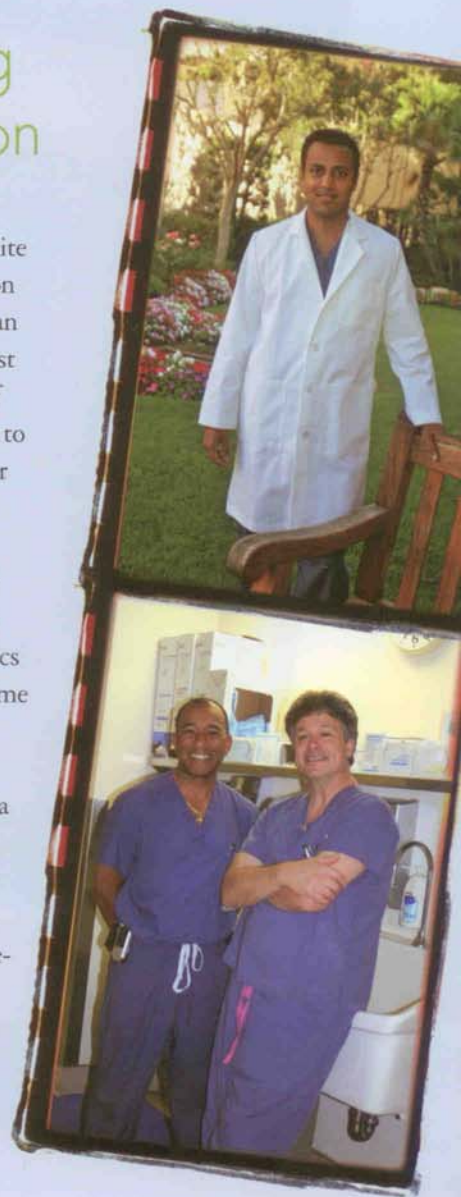
Dr. Singla is evaluating the effects of new combinations of existing drugs, as well as developing entirely new compounds, including long-lasting local anesthetics. "Your dentist may administer a numbing agent before filling a cavity," he says, "which works fine, but the effects last only a short time. We're investigating the use of local anesthetics mixed with certain polymers that release the anesthetic agent over a longer period of time — sometimes several days — to provide longer-lasting relief."

IMPROVING OUTCOMES. In addition to evaluating drugs' ability to reduce pain, Dr. Singla says, his research also examines any side-effects that may be involved. "Some substances can only be given to a certain point before you start to experience sleepiness or itching or constipation, for example," he says. In addition, he notes, "Narcotics have a ceiling effect. That is, giving more than a certain dose won't help any more. It will just create more side-effects. What we're looking for are ways to treat pain with *fewer* side-effects."

Adds Dr. Singla, "There are two important reasons to manage pain more effectively. One, of course, is to reduce suffering. The other is to improve outcomes. For example," he explains, "if a patient's pain prevents them from breathing deeply, they may suffer subsequent lung problems. If they can't move around because of pain, they may experience reduced strength or even blood clots. There's a lot of research that clearly demonstrates that good pain management improves outcomes, too."

SUPPORTING THE BEST IN CARE. "We're very pleased to support Dr. Singla's research regarding new methods of alleviating pain," says Jonathan D. Maskin, MD, chairman of the anesthesia section at Huntington Hospital. "This work has already led to significant new knowledge, some of which has now been published in professional journals. It has the potential to help patients not only here at Huntington Hospital but nationwide — and perhaps even worldwide."

Adds Evon S. Cadogan, MD, an anesthesiologist on Huntington Hospital's staff, "Our department of anesthesia has always been committed to providing the highest-quality, most advanced pain management. Dr. Singla's research reflects our commitment to continuously improve quality of care, so that patients here return to optimal health as rapidly as possible...and so that they are as comfortable as possible in the process."



Research conducted by Neil K. Singla, MD, director of clinical research with the department of anesthesia (pictured at top), is leading to new methods of alleviating postsurgical pain. Bottom: Jonathan D. Maskin, MD (right), chairman of the anesthesia section, and Evon S. Cadogan, MD, anesthesiologist, are strongly supportive of Dr. Singla's research — and excited about the benefits it brings to regional patients.