

Sanjeev Athale, M.D.

*Onsite Medical Director of Radiology
Adventist Health, Hanford*



Dr. Athale is the Onsite Medical Director of Radiology at Adventist Health in Hanford, California. He specializes in neuroradiology and is an interventional radiologist. He is board certified by the American Board of Radiology, the Indian Board of Radiology, and European board certified in Imaging. Dr. Athale joined Radisphere to work at Adventist in 2011.

What led you to the specialty of radiology?

Well, you could say that it runs in the family. My father was a professor of radiology at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College and my personal role model. My brother also is a leading neuroradiologist and the chief medical officer of Apollo Hospital, which is a prominent specialty hospital in Asia. This family history drew me toward neuroradiology. I was accepted into the radiology program at Mahatma Gandhi, which is also where I did my undergraduate work. It was quite a competitive program so I was pleased to be accepted, as was my family.

What is it about radiology that appealed to you?

I love to investigate the minute details of tricky cases and bring them to a conclusion. I review hundreds of cases very systematically to seek out issues and provide the best diagnosis for referring physicians and their patients.

I also love interventional radiology because it makes me feel like a “complete radiologist.” From looking at the films and investigating the cause right from the beginning, to the ultrasound and CT, and if needed, I get to meet and treat patients. I enjoy the entire radiology continuum.

Why did you choose to join Radisphere, working onsite at Adventist?

I wanted to be a part of a community. After going through their rigorous application process, I worked at the hospital to get a feel for the environment. The medical staff and administration liked me and wanted to hire me. Radisphere made me an offer and I took it. I had turned down another position as an associate professor of neuroradiology to join Radisphere, and I am glad I did.

How is Radisphere different from other radiology groups?

Many things impressed me greatly about the company. Firstly, with two well-respected subspecialty radiologists founding and actively involved in leading the company, it is easy for me to share my feelings because they understand my situation and can offer support and advice on a range of clinical and professional issues. Both are extremely accomplished radiologists, so it is a pleasure to work for them.

Furthermore, I believe they built a group that provides a higher level of service and satisfaction to the medical staff. This is also true when it comes to the sophistication, robustness and transparency of our quality reporting and processes. We are more transparent than any other group that I have been a part of, and I think Adventist appreciates it. It helps improve the communication and collaboration between Radisphere's radiologists and referring physicians.

Secondly, there is a strong team of subspecialty radiologists that support Adventist Health. Radisphere provides access to more subspecialists than any other radiology group in the area. In this part of California, Adventist has access to care found at hospital in large urban settings. So when I need back-up, it is easy to have another radiologist cover for me. It is also helpful when I am doing procedures or speaking with a physician about a case. Our radiologists are also available for real-time consultations when a referring physician may need additional guidance or insight on a patient care decision.

Finally, there are many other people in the Radisphere organization that have the expertise, background and clinical acumen that helps me to be successful on a day-to-day basis.

How do you see the field of radiology evolving?

Radiology is the one area of medicine that is evolving the quickest. It is necessary to stay informed and up to speed on everything from cutting-edge technology to new procedures.

What is one development that holds promise for improving patient care?

One new technique that Radisphere is instituting at Adventist is perfusion imaging in the treatment of stroke patients, which can be a powerful clinical tool. The ability to measure blood volume, blood flow, and vascular transit time during a conventional CT, with a single bolus injection of contrast material, is useful information that can help treat stroke patients more aggressively. With this information, we can positively identify ischemic and/or thrombotic occlusions and determine a course of treatment more efficiently. For example, we can administer tPA more quickly, if necessary.

What do you think is your greatest professional accomplishment?

For me, it is being positively recognized by my patients. The best satisfaction is when a patient holds my hand and tells me how great they feel after an IR procedure. That gives me the greatest pleasure and satisfaction to know that they feel better and that I helped to ease their suffering.

What would you say to the referring physicians at Adventist Health?

We are here to help in any possible way. I will do anything and everything in my capacity to keep the physicians and their patients happy. Most importantly, I want them to see radiology as a strategic partner in the treatment and care of their patients.

What do you want the patients to know?

I want them to know that radiology continues to evolve, so there is a lot we can do to help patients. For example, there are things that we can do with epidurals now that can help patients suffering from chronic back pain. Once they get relief, they tell me that they wish they had come to see me sooner. That is a great feeling.

I tell my patients that I treat all of them as if they are my own relatives. It makes me work harder and do everything I can to make them feel comfortable, safe and secure.