



MEET **ASWATHY CHERIYAN, MD, MPH** — A VALUED ASC MEDICAL MEMBER AND OUR DECEMBER SPOTLIGHT MEMBER.

How did you first find out about cytology and what drew you to this profession?

During my observership and early residency, I was lucky to have mentors who were passionate cytopathologists. Watching them interpret so much from just a few cells and how those interpretations directly shaped patient care completely fascinated me. I loved the blend of pattern recognition, problem-solving, and creativity that cytology allows, and I have been drawn to it ever since.

Tell us about an interesting case or situation that you have encountered in your practice.

During fellowship, I came across a pleural effusion cytology with just a few small clusters of atypical cells, and something about them stood out. Immunostains later favored a pancreatobiliary primary, even though there was no prior history or imaging to suggest it. It was one of those quiet but powerful cases that reminded me how cytology often begins with tiny details that end up revealing a much larger story.

What do you like best about being a cytopathologist?

What I enjoy most is how visual and intuitive cytology is, it is a field that keeps your eyes and mind engaged in equal measure. There is a rhythm and artistry to it that feels a bit like painting, which probably resonates with me because I am an artist. Both require attention to subtle shifts in color, form, and texture and when everything comes together, there is that moment of clarity and beauty, which can be very rewarding.

What is one piece of advice you have for young cytopathologists/cytologists who are in the early phases of their careers?

Stay curious and ask questions, even when you think you know the answer. Find mentors who encourage your growth and colleagues who challenge your interpretations, you will learn the most from those conversations around the microscope.

What do you value most about your membership in the ASC?

I love being part of a community that truly supports learning and connection. Through ASC,

I have met inspiring mentors, collaborators, and friends who share the same enthusiasm for cytopathology.

What is something interesting about you outside of your profession that you would like to share?

Outside of work, I love painting, especially textured art and acrylic pours and recently started creating coloring books that blend creativity with mindfulness. Art has become my way of recharging and staying grounded. I also enjoy reading for pleasure, and spending time with family.

