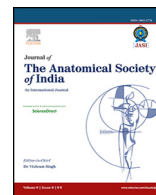




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Journal of the Anatomical Society of India

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In Memoriam

Prof Mahesh Chandra Vaidya



M.S, PhD, FAMS, FIAMS

Dr.B.C. Roy Awardee

A Stalwart of Anatomy

(Nov 23,1930 to May 4, 2018)

Dr. Mahesh Chandra Vaidya was born on Nov 23,1930 at Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh. He was second of the six children of Dr. Shyam Bihari Lal Vaidya, a highly respected Vaid of his time in the district. He grew up in a primarily rural environment, as an extremely hard working and dedicated student with the singular ambition of becoming a doctor, just like his father.

He completed his higher secondary schooling from Gondia followed by BSc. in 1950 from College of Science, Nagpur and then M.B.B.S from Govt. Medical College, Nagpur in 1955. Thereafter, he joined Gandhi Medical College, Bhopal as a demonstrator in 1956. In 1958, he moved to Delhi and joined the newly established All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) as Demonstrator in Anatomy. After finishing M.S. in Anatomy under Prof LW Chacko in 1962, he had made up his mind to be a part of the faculty at AIIMS and completed PhD in 1967. For his Postdoctoral studies, Dr. Vaidya went to the University of Oxford (UK) in 1967 to work with Prof Graham Weddell and subsequently spent a considerable period of time at the National Institute of Medical Research London (UK) working in close collaboration with Prof RJW Rees. It is here that he developed a keen interest in understanding the intricacies of immunopathogenesis of leprosy using mouse as the experimental model system.

At the AIIMS, Dr Vaidya was appointed as Assistant Professor of Anatomy in 1962, Associate Professor in 1970 and was elevated to the post of Professor in 1981. He served the institute till his retirement at the age of 60 in 1990. He enjoyed 32 satisfying years of active service at the AIIMS and devoted his time with passion, diligence and integrity. His friendly and helpful nature endeared him to his colleagues and students.

On his return from UK in the late 60s and early 70s, Dr Vaidya worked tirelessly to establish a nucleus of research around Cellular Immunology, a predominantly neglected and ill-understood subject of that time. For the purpose, he developed the first inbred stock of CBA/J mice at the AIIMS and established the first successful mouse model of leprosy in India. His passion to understand the intricacies of Immunology of leprosy led him to establish several unique experimental animal surgical procedures like neonatal and adult thymectomy, total body irradiation and syngeneic bone marrow reconstitution, the difficult procedure of thoracic duct cannulation in the mouse, skin grafting, autoradiography and many more. For all this, he fabricated unique in-house affordable gadgets; crafted in the AIIMS central workshop and these were greatly appreciated by the scientific community. Together with his dedicated team of students and colleagues, he published extensively to highlight the specific immune defect across leprosy spectrum, which could be rectified through T-cell reconstitution. This was indeed the first concept of instituting immunotherapy as an adjunct to standard treatment. He became a life member of Indian Leprosy Association in the early years of his professional life and contributed significantly to spreading awareness and advocating against the stigma attached to Leprosy.

At around the same time, the discovery of immune response (Ir) genes along with greater understanding of the major histocompatibility complex (MHC), in particular the HLA system in man and its primordial role in successful outcome of an organ or bone marrow graft, prompted Dr Vaidya to establish this unique specialty at the AIIMS. He succeeded in creating a faculty position for 'HLA Laboratory' in the Department of Anatomy which extended the much needed laboratory support to the nephrologists and transplant surgeons in carrying out successful kidney transplants using live related donors. The laboratory also provided similar support to the oncologists and hematologists in their quest to select matched donors for hematopoietic stem cell transplantation and to rheumatologists and internists HLA services as a diagnostic aid for several diseases. Very few could believe that all this was being done in a Department of Anatomy. Nevertheless this was reflective of the selfless efforts and great vision of Dr Vaidya. Eventually the HLA laboratory of AIIMS grew into the first full-fledged independent Department of Transplant Immunology and Immunogenetics in India, competing with the best internationally.

During his professional career, Prof. Vaidya accepted many short-term appointments between as a Consultant/Visiting Professor at universities and organizations like University of Oxford (UK), World Health Organization (WHO), College of Medicine & Medical Sciences, Arabian Gulf University, Bahrain and Stanford University School of Medicine Stanford, California. He was a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences (FAMS), IMA Academy of Medical Specialties (FIAMS), Founder Member of the Indian Immunology Society, Founder Secretary General of the Afro-Asia Oceania Association of the Anatomists (AAOAA), General Secretary of the co-ordination committee for welfare of leprosy patients, President of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) New Delhi branch, President of the Anatomical Society of India (1989-1990), life member of Indian Leprosy Association and many others. In September 1988, he successfully organized the 1st congress of the Afro-Asia Oceania Association of Anatomists in New Delhi.

Prof. Vaidya was a recipient of several professional awards that include the Commonwealth Medical Fellowship (1967), Wellcome Trust Fellowship (1968-1969), Senior Commonwealth Medical Fellowship (1970), W.H.O Research Training Grant Award (1974-1975), W.H.O Short Term Consultant, (1982, 1983, 1985), Gold Medal for the Best Paper at ASI 1971 conference, Dr. B.C. Roy Award Commissioner's and Hari Om Ashram Award (1985).

Post retirement, he started his own DNA Lab and Research Centre in Delhi and later worked as a consultant at the Tissue Typing laboratory at Religare, Gurgaon. He resigned at the age of 86 due to health issues. He leaves behind his wife, Mrs Indira Vaidya, three daughters (Anshu, Aparna and Aarti) and four grandchildren.

Prof Vaidya breathed his last on May 4, 2018. We pray to the almighty to give solace to the soul of this great teacher and medical scientist of India.

June 12, 2018

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