

## Chittoor Mohammed Habibullah

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Professor Chittoor Mohammed Habibullah has passed away. He succumbed to a massive heart attack in Hyderabad on the 10th of July this year. A doyen in gastroenterology has fallen. Over a career that spanned four decades, Dr. Habibullah made remarkable contributions to gastroenterology in India.

After graduation in MBBS from Guntur Medical College in 1958, Dr. Habibullah obtained MD (General Medicine) from Andhra Medical College, Vishakhapatnam in 1963. Further, he obtained a DM (Gastroenterology) from Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research, Chandigarh in 1972, one of the first in India to qualify for this degree.

After a stint as Assistant Professor in Medicine, Dr. Habibullah served as Professor and Head, Department of Gastroenterology, Osmania Medical College and Gastroenterologist, Osmania General Hospital, Hyderabad from 1975 to 1992. Later, he became Principal of Osmania Medical College from 1992 to 1994 and subsequently, the Director of Medical Education, Government of Andhra Pradesh. On his retirement from government service in 1994, he took charge as Director, Owaisi Hospital and Research Center, and Deccan College of Medical Sciences in Hyderabad, and Director, Center for Liver Research and Diagnostics in the same institution.

During his long tenure at Osmania Medical College, Dr. Habibullah built up one of the first few gastroenterology departments in South India. He gave his heart and soul to developing this department into one of the best gastroenterology departments in the country. This department is a standing testimony to Dr. Habibullah's leadership qualities. Here he displayed his extraordinary skills as a brilliant organizer, superb clinician, teacher and research worker. He foresaw the importance of research and initiated a series of research projects. As one who often visited this department in the heydays of its activity, I have witnessed the excitingly hectic academic activities that were going on. There was a group of enthusiastic young doctors and scientists working in unison with total commitment under Habib's leadership. In every conference you could see Habib and his entire team participating and presenting papers. It was an inspiring sight. Habib was a mentor par excellence. He molded many generations of gastroenterologists and basic scientists.

During a long and distinguished career, Dr. Habibullah's contribution to building up gastroenterology in India from a little known nascent specialty to a major discipline was substantial. His commitment, sacrifices and vision during this long journey were admirable. He gave a fillip to hepatology research, and particularly hepatocyte transplantation, which was his favorite field. He was a pioneer in this field who established an international reputation. His research spanned hepatocyte transplantation, artificial liver support and its role in bridging treatment till liver transplantation. In addition, he was working on the development of a vaccine for hepatitis C and on the molecular characterization of *Helicobacter pylori*. He spent a whole lifetime in pursuing research in his pet areas and making major scientific contributions. He has completed several national and international research projects and presented papers in conferences worldwide. Dr. Habibullah published 150 papers

in national and international medical journals and contributed chapters to a large number of books.

Dr. Habibullah trained a large number of DM students and guided 29 PhD students, which is no mean achievement for a clinician. He was Chairman of the Academic Committee of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (1995) and Chairman of Selection Committee of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (1996). He was a member of the Task Force for stem cell research and liver diseases at the Indian Council for Medical Research. He was the Chairman of the monitoring committee for the Clinical Research facility for the stem cells Technology and Regenerative Medicine at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology in Hyderabad.

The Center for Liver Research and Diagnostics which Dr. Habibullah founded in Hyderabad is one of the few centers which have undertaken liver cell therapy in liver diseases. Recently, this center launched a clinical program using stem cells from bone marrow and fetal liver in liver disease. Currently a Center for Stem Cell Sciences has been established at Hyderabad under the Chairmanship of Dr. Habibullah. Dr. Habibullah was also actively engaged in the process of establishing a center of Regenerative Medicine and Tissue Engineering at Hyderabad with collaboration of US scientists.

Dr. Habibullah was the President of the Indian Society of Gastroenterology (1988–1989) and the Indian Society for the Study of the Liver. For his meritorious work, the honorary degree of “Doctor of Science” was conferred on him by NTR University of Health Sciences, Andhra Pradesh. He was honored with “Padma Shree” by the Government of India in 2001. He won the prestigious “Dr. B. C. Roy award” for

Medical Excellence and Modi Unichem, ICMR Award in 1992. He was recipient of the “Kharazmi Award” award for Medical Research from the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1996). At the Golden Jubilee Conference of the Indian Society of Gastroenterology in Kolkata in 2009, Dr. Habibullah was honored with a richly-deserved Professor F P Antia Memorial Life-Time Achievement award. He held memberships and fellowships of a large number of academic societies including National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Medical Sciences and American Association for Study of Liver Diseases.

Above and beyond all his professional and academic achievements, Dr. Habibullah was a simple, highly disciplined and pious gentleman. Simplicity, and a caring and compassionate personality with abundant patience and perseverance were his strengths which defined his success in every sphere of life. He was extremely religious and God-fearing. He was a charitable person donating liberally to the poor and downtrodden. His hobbies were reading and keeping himself updated with all the recent advances in science. Dr. Habibullah was a great and gracious friend. He was loved and admired by his peers. He was my close personal friend for forty years. Magnanimous with his love and affection, Habib, as I called him, has left an irreplaceable vacuum in my heart. Indian Gastroenterology has lost a great guide and leader. Dr. Habibullah is survived by his son Dr. Md. Aejaz Habeeb and daughter Dr. Athiya Ameer. May his soul rest in peace with God.

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