



## OBITUARY

### Prof O.P. Ghai

Past National President of IAP, and  
former Dean, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi

The doyen of child health in India, former Professor and Head of the Department of Pediatrics, Dean of the All India Institute Medical Sciences, and a past president of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics, Prof Om Prakash Ghai, passed away on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2008. He was 80 years old and had suffered a stroke a few days ago.

Professor Om Prakash Ghai was born on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1928. He joined the Government Lahore Medical College for MBBS course, but had to shift to the Government Medical College Amritsar in the wake of partition after independence from where completed undergraduation. He obtained DCH from Bombay University (1953) and MD (Pediatrics) from Medical College Indore in 1958 under the mentorship of the legendary Professor J.M. Pohowala who influenced him immensely. He worked as a Registrar in Pediatrics at the Irwin Hospital. Professor Ghai started the Department of Pediatrics at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1959 with six beds for children. He obtained advanced training in Pediatrics from Children Medical Center, Harvard University, and was a recipient of Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship.

A renowned child specialist, Prof Ghai remained the head of the department of pediatrics at AIIMS for over 25 years (1962-89). Under his leadership, the department evolved into a multi-specialty institution of international repute. His clinical acumen was legendary. He excelled as a keen researcher, especially in the areas of childhood diarrhea, micronutrients and Indian childhood cirrhosis. As a teacher and role model, he inspired an entire generation of pediatricians in the country. Many of his students achieved top positions in the profession, academia and government. He had superb writing skills. He was the Editor of the Indian Pediatrics in 1973-75. A vast majority of MBBS and nursing students, the budding doctors and nurses in the country, receive fundamental lessons in child health from his famous textbook, 'Essential Pediatrics'. He rose to occupy the high office of the Dean of AIIMS prior to his superannuation in 1988.

Prof. Ghai was the National President of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics in 1978. He organized the International Congress of Pediatrics in 1977, the first international conference in Pediatrics in India. Prof Ghai was a recipient of numerous honors including the fellowships of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics, International College of Pediatrics, and the National Academy of Medical Sciences (India), as well as the Kamla Menon award for research in diarrheal disease. He also received the 'Insignia of Merit' medallion of the International Pediatric Association.

He had an informal, friendly, participatory and spontaneous style of work. He inspired his students and colleagues by igniting new ideas in a very unassuming way. He earned respect not by authority, but by the power of his ideas and gentleness. Dr. Ghai was a visionary in true sense. His name will forever remain etched to the annals of pediatrics and child health of our country. He is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son.

The pediatrics fraternity of the country has lost a father-figure, a teacher par excellence, an inspiring leader and a thorough gentleman. To the family of Prof. Ghai, we offer our heartfelt condolences, and to late Prof. Ghai, we pay our tribute as an illustrious son of India who dedicated his life to the cause of children of our Nation, and more significantly, left an exemplary and lasting legacy for time to come.