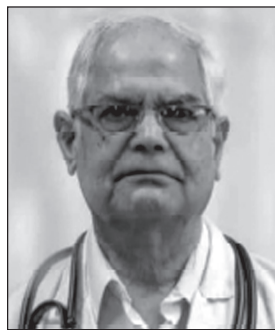


## Obituary

### Jitendra Nath Pande

(14 June 1941–23 May 2020)



Professor Jitendra Nath Pande was born on 14 June 1941 in Shikohabad, District Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh, to Late Shri Madan Mohan Pande and Late Mrs Kamla Devi Pande. Late Shri Madan Lal Pande was an accomplished English teacher who published many books on English grammar and became principal of an intermediate college. Mrs Kamla Devi was a home-maker. Dr Pande was the seventh of eight siblings in

the family and was very close to his elder brother Dr Gyanendra Nath Pande who was 2 years older than him and was Emeritus Professor of Civil and Computational Engineering at Swansea University, Wales, United Kingdom.

Dr Pande joined school directly from class VI, and passed BSc Part I and got admission to several medical colleges in Uttar Pradesh and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi and joined the premier institute in 1958 and completed his MBBS at the top of his class in 1962. His batchmates remember him as the brightest of bright minds. While majority of his class-fellows made a choice of migrating to USA and UK and now live in large mansions, Dr Pande preferred to stay in India and pursued MD Medicine which he finished in 1966 at AIIMS. He then did his Senior Residency for three years. He joined as an Assistant Professor (called Lecturer at that time) in 1970 and climbed the academic ladder to become a Professor in 1988. He became Head of the Department of Medicine in 1993 and remained in this position till his superannuation on 30 June 2003. Subsequently, he worked as a Senior Consultant at Sita Ram Bhartia Institute of Science and Research, New Delhi till his demise.

Although he came from a small town, he was extremely forward thinking, cared little about what people would think or say. He married Dr Yvette Pande, who was then a postgraduate student in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at AIIMS, across boundaries of culture and religion in 1971. Aman, their son, was born in 1975, who graduated from University College of Medical Sciences, New Delhi and is presently working as a consultant in Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at the prestigious Cleveland Clinic in the USA.

Dr Pande had an excellent academic career and was trained at the best institutions. With a Commonwealth fellowship, he spent a year at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith Hospital, London in 1974–75. He had a keen interest in epidemiology and had a mastery of statistics. In 1988–89, he did a fellowship in Epidemiology (the International Clinical Epidemiology Network; INCLEN) at Chapel Hill, Schools of Medicine and Public Health, University of North Carolina, USA. Prior to that he went to Karolinska Institute, Stockholm in 1979 to learn bronchoscopy and had the distinction of performing the first fiberoptic bronchoscopy in India. He brought this technique to India and trained innumerable pulmonologists,

which changed the practice of Pulmonary Medicine in the country.

Professor Pande was a passionate teacher who trained an entire generation of undergraduate and postgraduate students; and all his students cherish his teachings. Being in the faculty of Medicine, he pursued Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine and trained many faculty members in the field. He was a keen researcher and his areas of research included high altitude physiology, lung mechanics in health and disease, exercise physiology, bronchiectasis, interstitial lung disease and health effects of air pollution. He brought the practice of respiratory medicine in India to a level that was different from its previous tag of ‘tuberculosis’. Quite early, he realized the adverse effects of air pollution and established an air pollution monitoring unit at AIIMS and conducted a study on the effects of air pollution on emergency visits of patients with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and acute coronary events. This research led the Supreme Court to order changes in the type of fuel use to compressed natural gas (CNG), leading to improvement in air quality. His work on bronchiectasis has been quoted in the Textbook of respiratory medicine by Crofton and Douglas. He later edited a textbook titled *Respiratory medicine in the tropics*, published by Oxford University Press. I saw him very closely while working on that book. He could dictate on a subject with ‘golden words’ without referring to any book. It is indeed a treat to read chapters written by him on pulmonary physiology and other topics in this book. While he was a great clinician and believed a lot on history and clinical examination, he was always quick to learn new technologies. In 1991, when I joined him, I saw him as a wizard on computer operations and he was doing his own statistical analyses.

Dr Pande always had a vision for the future. As early as 1993 when he took over as head of the department, he decided to create an intensive care unit (ICU) in the Department of Medicine, which till then was in the domain of the Department of Anaesthesia. Since there was no extra space in the hospital, he designed the ICU in the medicine ward and started with ‘simple’ transport ventilators with which he was able to provide expert ventilatory care. The combination of his clinical acumen and understanding of respiratory physiology and internal medicine made him a top class intensivist; he was the most sought after physician to opine on all serious cases in various departments within and outside AIIMS.

Professor Pande loved teaching youngsters. He would happily take the first class of young third semester students on ‘Introduction to Medicine’, which his students would cherish all through their lives. No one can forget his clinical analysis of a case based on history and physical examination. All of us adored him for his clinical diagnosis using bedside clinical methods. Indeed he was a great teacher and mentor. AIIMS was his family and he had great affection for undergraduate and postgraduate students such as a person would have for his own children. All his students had the liberty to meet him any time they wished.

Professor Pande led an extremely simple and disciplined life. He was there every day in the Department of Medicine at 8 a.m. and in the outpatient department (OPD) at 8.30 a.m. He used to

leave the department at 8 p.m. every day and always came on Sundays and holidays. In the OPD, he never had an attendant at the door and would get up every time to call out for the next patient with strict queue and hated anybody trying to barge in. He would himself take the history, write the details and fill up forms. He would never take help from any assistant. I always used to read OPD cards written by him where he would jot down the history, examination, diagnosis and also his thought process behind that, which was indeed unmatched. His level of care for the 'presidents, princes and the poor' was the same. I remember him saying: 'patients are your best teachers'.

We used to wait for his ward rounds, which were a treat to attend. It was often that he would arrive at a clinical diagnosis, based on the clinical history and examination, which no one else in the unit would have thought of. I vividly recall a 41-year-old woman on mechanical ventilation whom I was unable to wean off the ventilator. I sought his opinion. He listened to me on the way and, as he reached the bedside, he lifted the patient's right upper limb and dropped it (to see the tone of the muscles) and said: 'She has critical illness polyneuropathy'. I was shocked. The diagnosis was confirmed by electrophysiological studies. His thinking was faster than a computer and he kept surprising all his associates with his clinical diagnosis and the scientific reasoning of his conclusion.

Professor Pande was a founder fellow of the National College of Chest Physicians and became a member of the American Thoracic Society in 1971. He was also Fellow of the National Academy of Medical Sciences and also served as Chief Editor, *Annals of National Academy of Medical Sciences*. Besides, he served as an expert to several bodies in the government including the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). He was very actively involved in the investigation of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy. Considering his achievements in the field of Medicine, Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, he had very few awards as he was

always reluctant to apply or get himself nominated for any award. He truly dedicated his life to practice, teaching and research and led a very simple life. I almost never saw him in formal shoes and very occasionally wearing a neck tie. He could drive his car only from home to hospital (less than half kilometre).

Dr Pande's contribution to the development of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine would always be remembered as a game-changer as the specialty was earlier known as 'Tuberculosis and Chest Medicine'. His understanding of respiratory physiology and integrating the same with pulmonary and critical care practice led to the enhancement of this specialty throughout India. He always kept practice of medicine and the esteem of AIIMS, New Delhi above his personal needs and desires.

Professor Pande's demise is an irreparable loss for the medical fraternity. He imparted knowledge and wisdom and was mentor to a generation of doctors, and I can boast of being a beneficiary of his teachings. He would be remembered as a great teacher and physician who served millions of suffering people from all strata of society. From the core of my heart, I offer tributes to a great mentor, who is indeed immortal because of his deeds. I would miss him throughout my life.

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### *Obituaries*

Many doctors in India practise medicine in difficult areas under trying circumstances and resist the attraction of better prospects in western countries and elsewhere. They die without their contributions to our country being acknowledged.

*The National Medical Journal of India* wishes to recognize the efforts of these doctors. We invite short accounts of the life and work of a recently deceased colleague by a friend, student or relative. The account in about 500 to 1000 words should describe his or her education and training and highlight the achievements as well as disappointments. A photograph should accompany the obituary.

—Editor