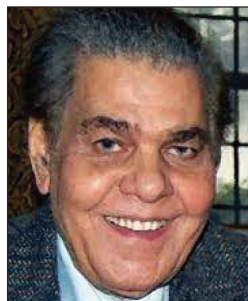


## Obituary

### Purushottam Upadhyaya

(14 August 1928–8 March 2023)



Professor Purushottam Upadhyaya was born on 14 August 1928. His passing away on 8 March 2023 was a very sad day for not only the fraternity of paediatric surgeons but also for the larger fraternity of physicians and surgeons. He has indeed left a huge void.

He joined the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi as a young Assistant Professor (Lecturer as it was known in those days) in the Department of General Surgery. In those early days, AIIMS took the initiative to develop several surgical sub/super-specialties and he took up the mandate to develop paediatric surgery. He received his initiation and the early training in paediatric surgery in the UK and returned to establish the Department of Paediatric Surgery at AIIMS in 1969. He led the department by personal example and continued as the Head till he took premature retirement in 1985–86. During his time at AIIMS, he gave stature to Indian Paediatric Surgery by collaborations with universities in the UK and Europe and as Visiting Professor to universities in many countries all over the world, notably Sheffield (UK), Zurich (Switzerland), Kabul (Afghanistan), Shiraz (Iran), Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), Kuwait, Benghazi and Tripoli (Libya), Uppsala (Sweden) and the Children's Hospital in Chicago. Following his retirement from AIIMS, he joined the King Faisal University, Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

His academic qualifications included MBBS (1952), MS (1955), FRCS (England) 1959 and FAMS (Fellow of the National Academy of Medical Sciences) 1977, and numerous other honorary accolades and fellowships from within India and abroad.

Paediatric Surgery, in the early days, was constantly developing in terms of techniques, equipment, teaching and clinical methods. He was quick to spot deficiencies and applied his mind to several innovations, which added immense perspectives to the practice of paediatric surgery, not only in India but also abroad. The notable ones were the concept of saving the traumatized spleen, experimental work in the causation of neural tube defects, an indigenized valved shunt in the treatment of hydrocephalus, an instrument for the treatment of rectal atresia and many more. He introduced the concept of magnification in surgery, especially for newborns and very small children. He quickly realized that the postoperative care

of small children and newborns demanded clinical care which was unique to that age group. He introduced the concept of specialized care for surgical neonates and established the first neonatal surgical intensive care unit in India in addition to a high dependence area for the older ones who required intensive care.

Professor Upadhyaya was a great teacher, a team leader, a researcher, a wonderful orator and a clinician par excellence. He even introduced innovations in medical education and technology as the Head of the Medical Illustration Unit (the predecessor of the current K.L. Wig Centre for Medical Education Technology and Innovation) and collaborated with the Dundee University, UK to modernize teaching methods.

He has a long list of national and international awards and recognitions starting from his MBBS days and then till late into his retired life. He was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award not only from the AIIMS, New Delhi but also by the World Federation of Associations of Pediatric Surgeons.

In addition to his academic brilliance, he was a highly talented personality—the many talents included stage acting, directing plays, music, writing prose and poetry, painting and sculpting—the elegance of which showed when one visited him at his residence. His latest contribution was a book—*Sandhya Swar*—a collection of 52 poems written by him after retirement. The AIIMS auditorium was conceptualized by him and it is well known for its perfect acoustics.

He has left behind a legacy that will be difficult to fill. Paediatric surgeons, particularly in India will never forget him and those who were fortunate enough to have had an opportunity to learn from him and work with him will experience the loss of a father figure.

He built his nest in Dehradun where he spent his retired life. He lost his life's companion some years back. He is survived by his son Prashant (who is a graduate and postgraduate from AIIMS, New Delhi and followed his father's footsteps to become a paediatric surgeon and lives in Dehradun with his family) and his daughter Anuradha (who lives in USA with her family). In addition to his immediate family, his acquired family—the alumni—will miss him dearly but also find strength in the belief that he will continue to shower his blessings on us from above.

Om Shanti. May his soul rest in peace.

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