

Obituary

Savitri Shrivastava

(1 July 1935–20 June 2022)



Dr Savitri Shrivastava, a pioneer paediatric cardiologist, founder president of the Paediatric Cardiac Society of India, and a highly respected teacher left for heavenly abode on 20 June 2022.

She was born at Jabalpur in a doctor's family. She had a brilliant academic career and did her MBBS from Agra university in 1957. She joined the Indian Army Medical Corps from 1960 to 1967. Subsequently, she did her DM cardiology from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi (AIIMS) in 1971. She obtained a fellowship in Paediatric Cardiology from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis in 1975–76. She spent most of her academic career at AIIMS defining and expanding the discipline of paediatric cardiology in India. She, with her teacher Dr Raj Tandon, was responsible for training much of India's workforce that catered to the treatment of heart ailments in children. In her long and illustrious professional career, she taught generations of students who went on to head major centres of cardiology and paediatric cardiology in India. She served briefly as Head of the Department of Cardiology at Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow (1992–95) and worked formally in the private sector till the age of 75 years.

A trained cardiac pathologist, a founder president of the Indian Academy of Echocardiography, a trail blazer interventional cardiologist, and a dedicated teacher, Dr Savitri Shrivastava's contributions to paediatric cardiology are immense and difficult to quantify, and perhaps under-celebrated, even as she received numerous awards and accolades. Dr Jesse Edwards,

the famous cardiac pathologist at Minnesota remarked that she was an asset to his department where she did some high impact cardiac pathology research. She had several firsts to her credit nationally and internationally. She was part of the team that performed balloon mitral valvotomy for the first time in the world, which opened the doors for many interventional cardiology techniques.

Self-disciplined, hard working and demanding of high-quality work from everyone around her, she was often misunderstood initially, until one realized that her hard exterior hid a soft and caring interior that always nurtured high-quality professionalism in her students. I was fortunate to be one of her students, and she was interested in my professional growth throughout my career. There are numerous paediatricians and cardiologists in India who fondly remember the motherly affection of Dr Shrivastava.

A strong-willed lady, never shy of fighting obstacles, Dr Shrivastava continued to explore newer horizons. She travelled widely, gave invited lectures, wrote articles, books, and treated patients, and inspired youngsters almost till the time physical ailments made it impossible for her to do so. She was honoured by the Paediatric Cardiac Society of India in 2012, by the international Paediatric Interventional Cardiac Society in 2013, and by the President of India in 2006, 2008 with lifetime achievement awards for her contributions to the field of Paediatric Cardiology.

Dr Savitri Shrivastava, true to her name, reflected the radiant lustre of a relentless pursuit of professional excellence. Many a children have a better shot at life due to her efforts.

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