

## Obituary

### Dr Harbans Lal

(26 February 1934–14 September 2009)



The doyen of child health in Punjab, former Professor and Head of the Department, Dr Harbans Lal, left for his heavenly abode on 14 September 2009. He was 75 years old and died of a cardiac ailment.

Dr Harbans Lal was born in Basarki Gillan, a small village near Amritsar. He received his early school education in the village school and completed his secondary education at Khalsa College, Amritsar. He distinguished

himself in both studies and athletics. His scholastic achievements greatly impressed his teachers, who encouraged him to pursue a career in medicine.

He completed his MB,BS at the Government Medical College, Amritsar in 1956. He then joined the Doctor of Medicine course in internal medicine, followed by specialization in paediatrics.

He joined the Punjab Civil Medical Services but was recalled to serve as registrar in the department of paediatrics by his mentor, Dr S. S. Manchanda in 1963. This relationship was to prove highly productive, leading to several research publications over the next decade. Especially notable were his contributions to iron deficiency,

megaloblastic anaemia in infants and rickets. In December 1971, Dr Lal joined the Government Medical College, Patiala as an Assistant Professor. His later publications addressed important issues confronting paediatricians at that time and included a comparative clinical trial on malaria and complications of Indian childhood cirrhosis. He became Professor in 1979 and Head of Department in 1981. He served with distinction in this position for the next 9 years, until his retirement in 1990. He was a lifetime member of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics and an advocate of continuing medical education.

Dr Harbans Lal pursued paediatrics with a passion and cherished the interest of his little patients above all else. In his practice, he displayed humility that is inherent in the first aphorism of Hippocrates: 'Life is short, and Art long; the crisis fleeting; experience perilous, and decision difficult.' He recognized the importance of not only doing what is right for the patient, but also to display compassion for a family in crisis over the child's illness. He was a great teacher endowed with qualities of head and heart; he inspired his students and taught them the value of a practical and pragmatic approach to paediatric practice. Dr Harbans Lal passed on these enduring values to several generations of paediatricians in Punjab who trained under his guidance.

He is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son.

V. K. AHUJA

Ahuja Nursing Home  
Deepak House, Dhuri Road  
Sangrur  
Punjab  
drvkahuja@indiatimes.com

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