



IN MEMORIAM FOR PROF. NOSHIR H. WADIA

Sunday the 10th April 2016, was a sad day for the Indian and the International Neurology community. On this day, Prof. Noshir Wadia, universally regarded as the founder of contemporary Indian neurology died at the age of 91 years.

Noshir Wadia was born on the 20th January 1925 in Surat to Dina and Hormusji Wadia in a middle income timber merchant family. He always wanted to be a doctor and pursued his premedical education at St. Xaviers school and college. In 1943, he joined the Grant Medical College and the Sir J.J. Group of Hospitals and completed his UG and PG studies by 1950.

In those days, MRCP was considered the gold standard for any physician and also a very big challenge. He successfully cleared the MRCP (London) at the first attempt in March 1952. Between 1952 and 1956, he pursued his neurology training in the UK, initially under Mr. G.F. Rowbotham in the department of neurosurgery, Newcastle General Hospital. It was Mr. Rowbotham who strongly recommended him to Sir Russell Brain. At the interview, Sir Russell Brain asked him “will you go back to India or stay here?” Dr. Wadia’s unhesitant answer was “I will go back”. Thus Dr. Wadia became the registrar to the legendary neurologist Sir Russell Brain at the Maide Vale and London Hospital. In 1954, he had some doubts about pursuing a career in neurology and was discouraged by the then Surgeon General of Bombay State’s reply that he should get appointed as a general physician just as many of his contemporaries had already done. He spoke to his mentor, Sir Russell Brain, towards the end of his tenure at the Maide Vale Hospital seeking his advice about the future of his career in neurology. Sir Brain, spoke to his colleague and friend, Dr. Macdonald Critchley and then advised Dr. Wadia to return to Bombay as a neurologist at his alma mater. That is the reason why Sir Russell Brain took Dr. Noshir Wadia to London Hospital, where they had to do general medicine, neurology and emergencies. He was the first Asian to be appointed as a registrar in London Hospital.

At the age of 32years, he set up the department of neurology the Grant Medical College and Sir J.J. Group of Hospitals, when there were very few dedicated neurologists in Asia. He worked in an honorary capacity and established the department in spite of being inundated with work, paucity of funds and equipment and in the days of the license raj. Yet, he found time to identify and document the prevalence of local and unique diseases to build up a regional neurological nosology. An astute clinician, his outstanding research was in identifying an autosomal dominant cerebellar ataxia with slow eye movements – later designated as SCA2. Not only did he establish the clinical features but also studied the velocity of the slow saccades and in collaboration with German colleagues documented the degeneration of neurons in the PPRF. This exemplary work was spread over several decades through sheer dint of hard work and perseverance. His other seminal contribution has been the identification of a new adult polio like illness following acute haemorrhagic conjunctivitis in 1971 – later designated as EV-70 disease. He also worked on nutritional disorders of the nervous system, congenital atlanto-axial dislocation and Wilson’s disease. All these entities were later documented in

his book “Neurological Practice: An Indian Perspective”.

In 1973, he was appointed as the Director of the Department of Neurosciences at JHRC. Again this department was recognized by the National and International Neurology community as one of the centres of excellence in India. In 2010, he voluntarily stepped down as Director, and in appreciation of his services, he was the first consultant to be appointed as Director Emeritus.

Through his teaching, he has attracted medical students to neurology and is now recognized as a mentor to hundreds of practicing neurologists globally. He has treated thousands of patients with care and concern laced with elegant bedside manners. Those who met him invariably came away impressed by the depth of his knowledge of neurology and science and the natural courtesy he displays towards people from all walks of life. He has been the recipient of many awards which he has accepted humbly. He served the World Federation of Neurology in many capacities and his services to the WFN were fully recognized when he became the first recipient of the WFN gold medal for Services to Neurology at the World Congress of Neurology, Bangkok in October 2009 – a benchmark achievement. On 26th January 2012, the Government of India recognized his services to neurology by conferring the Padma Bhushan award to him.

We, his students and colleagues, feel that he was a caring doctor, an excellent teacher, a researcher and above all, a good human being. He will remain in our hearts, always loved, immensely missed but never forgotten. *May his soul rest in peace.*

PROF. BHIM SEN SINGHAL & PROF. SAROSH M KATRAK