

# Obituary



In memory of

## Professor Ishwar Chander Verma,

FRCP (London), FAMS (India), FAAP (USA)  
25th December 1936 to 8th February 2024

Professor I C Verma is hailed as the “Father of Genetics” in India and received the Padma Shri award in 2023 amongst multiple other awards through his career. Many of us have had the privilege to be associated with Dr I C Verma whilst many others have indirectly benefitted from his groundbreaking work in genetics in India. He has contributed extensively towards the development of genetics in India including genetics research at a time when little was known about the subject and its implications in clinical care. He worked to develop affordable tests, as well as education and training of scientists and doctors, and thereby the above bestowed title is most befitting.

Professor Verma had his schooling in East Africa, came to Mumbai for premedical training followed by MBBS at Amritsar Medical College. He received the PN Chuttani Gold Medal for standing first in Clinical Medicine. His residency training was at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He obtained MRCP London in 1966, as well as DCH at Glasgow University. He is the first student to be bestowed MNAMS from the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS) by examination. He

received genetics training in Zurich, London, Edinburgh, Manchester, Boston and NIH, USA. Dr Verma is credited with setting up two state-of-the-art genetic centres in India – the first at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi where he served for 30 years. He then established the genetic centre at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SGRH) in 1997 and was associated with it till the very end.

Dr Verma had multiple sterling qualities which are worth noting for those who did not work under his tutelage, especially his ability to delve for new opportunities for diagnosis and treatment that could serve patients with genetic disorders in India. He was always impatient to implement the latest in technology, believing that diagnostic testing must be available in India for our patients. It was under his chairmanship that the first ever compassionate access program for patients with lysosomal storage disorders was initiated. More than 300 patients have received treatment under this and additionally many genetic specialists enhanced their knowledge and skills for treatment of patients with genetic disorders. His extensive experience made him the most important resource person for the formation and implementation of the National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD) in India. His humility made it easy for anyone to access him and seek his opinion, guidance, and blessings – patients, young doctors, scientists, entrepreneurs, and students. He would always provide advice that the person kept close to his/ her heart and followed towards success and achievement. He was instrumental in the initiation of the initial parent groups – the Down syndrome society, Fragile X society, Lysosomal Storage Disorders Support Society (LSDSS), and many more.

Dr Verma believed in being updated and read extensively. He was buying till now the newest editions of genetic books and would always read his most favourite journals - the New England Journal of Medicine, The Lancet, and the British Medical Journal (BMJ). He enjoyed sharing the latest information and knowledge with his colleagues.

Despite his busy schedule, he never forgot the exceptional non-genetic talents and abilities of his colleagues and students and made it a point to appreciate and encourage them with his gentle, charming smile. Dr Verma, our ‘Sir’ always, has left a void in the institution of genetics in India. We are indebted to him to carry forward his legacy of passion for the subject, a vision beyond the ordinary and a quest to keep the light of genetics burning bright always.

We will miss him immensely. We pray for him for everlasting peace. Om Shanti!

Ratna Dua Puri

Dr Ratna Dua Puri is Chairperson and Senior Consultant at the Institute of Medical Genetics & Genomics, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi.