

The citation for the presentation of
THE ALUMNI AWARD OF DISTINCTION
Of the Christian Medical College Alumni Association
for the year 2006

to

DR. P. S.S.SUNDAR RAO

Pamidipani Samuel Simon Sundar Rao joined the Christian Medical College in 1955 as a statistician, armed with an honours degree in Statistics and Mathematics. The nutrition research project he was associated with was funded by the William-Waterman Fund; this relationship eventually led to the Williams family donating the Williams Building to promote clinical research in CMC. Sundar quickly demonstrated what statistical support could do for health care and medicine. And a permanent position was found for him in the Community Health Department.

From this position, he assisted in planning, conduct, data management and reporting of basic, clinical and epidemiological studies. He also initiated several major research programmes of his own. By the time he retired in 1994, he had been the principal investigator in no less the 12 major epidemiological studies and collaborator in literally hundreds of research projects of all kinds. All this resulted in his authoring over one hundred papers in accredited and international journals.

Meanwhile, Biostatistics was making its contribution to the advancement of Community Health education towards its unique position in CMC. Sundar Rao made the teaching of Biostatistics relevant and interesting by using data that were collected from research projects in the institution. Soon separate training programmes in Biostatistics came into being in CMC: a one year Diploma Programme in Health Statistics in 1980 and a two years Masters programme in Biostatistics from 1986. These activities led Sundar Rao to author "An Introduction to Biostatistics" for students in health sciences. He also authored the Comprehensive Manual in Health Statistics which U. S. Public Health Service uses in their international training programmes.

Along with these hectic activities, Sundar Rao pursued his own academic training and development. He received the M.P.H. in Biostatistics from the University of California in Berkeley and the Doctorate in Biostatistics from the Columbia University in New York. He became a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society of UK, Human Biology Council of USA and Indian Society for Medical Statistics, in addition to being Member of numerous scientific societies in India and abroad.

This illustrious professional life has made many enduring contributions to the institution, over almost four decades. CMC was perhaps the first medical institution in India to have a Biostatistics Unit. This became upgraded into the first Biostatistics Department in the country in 1964, headed by Sundar Rao till his retirement in 1994. A rigorous critical and analytical attitude has become an ingredient of education in CMC at all levels. The availability of sound statistical expertise contributed greatly to the flowering medical research in CMC in the 1960s and 70s and continues to bear fruit. In a context of severe scarcity of research funding, the manifest expertise in Biostatistics in CMC facilitated generous funding of research by many international agencies. Sundar Rao helped to establish the Research Committee which has greatly contributed to the quality and quantity of research in CMC, remaining as its secretary till his retirement. The monthly Research Bulletin is yet another of his contributions.

The dependability and organizational competence of Sundar Rao led to his appointment as the Registrar of CMC for seven years from 1967. In this capacity he helped to institute many of the characteristics of student selection for which CMC is justly famous. He brought the same capabilities to his six year term as the General Superintendent of CMC from 1976.

Sundar Rao was responsible for introducing the punch card analysis system, one of the first in the country, into the institution. This led to computerization in the accounts department which in turn was the forerunner of the present manifold dimensions of information and communication technology in CMC.

Thus in Dr. Sundar Rao we have a pillar of the academic, professional and institutional evolution of CMC. It can truly be said that CMC would have been different, and the poorer, if this promising young scientist had not chosen to cast his lot with CMC at a time when Vellore had little to offer to non-medical professionals.

In recognition of these contributions as well as his exemplary personal characteristics of integrity, commitment and professional excellence, the C.M.C. Alumni Association is proud to confer its Award of Distinction for the year 2006 to Professor P. S. S. SUNDAR RAO

Dr. Raju Titus Chacko
Secretary
Alumni Association

Dr. Joyce Ponnaiya
President
Alumni Association

12 August 2006