

Dr. A.S. Balasubramanian joined the Neurochemistry Laboratory of the Department of Neurological Sciences, Christian Medical College in 1959 as a graduate student of the late Professor B.K. Bachhawat. The next four years saw Drs. Balasubramanian, Bachhawat and Austin (a paediatric neurologist, at the University of Oregon) report that metachromatic leukodystrophy, a glycolipid storage disorder is caused by a deficiency of the enzyme arylsulfatase A. In 1964, he was awarded his PhD from the Kerala University for this pioneering work in biochemistry.

It was his work on arylsulfatases that paved the way for the study of enzyme defects in other glycolipid storage disorders and to the development of prenatal testing and treatment modalities for these inherited metabolic diseases. He spent two years (1966 – 1968) as a research associate at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles working on further aspects of sulphate metabolism and then returned to the Neurochemistry Laboratory, CMC.

In his 38 years of meticulous research, he and his group have discovered new catalytic aryl acylamidase and peptidase activities of the cholinesterases. These non cholinergic functions of the cholinesterases were considered in the pathogenesis of Alzheimers Disease by groups around the world. His group has also elucidated mechanisms for the phosphorylation and dephosphorylation of the mannose-6-phosphate receptor in the brain, critical in the trafficking of lysosomal enzymes. His work has been documented in over 100 research publications in national and international journals and he is the author and editor of several books in his field.

Dr. Balasubramanian has been honoured nationally with the Hari Om Ashram Alembic Research Award for basic research in medical sciences by the ICMR in 1981 and with the Prof. Shadaksharaswamy Endowment award for outstanding contributions in biological chemistry and allied sciences by the Society of Biological Chemists (Indian) in 1988. He was the recipient of the Rev. Fr. Lourdu Yeddanapalli Memorial Award for outstanding contributions in research by CMC in 1978. In 1994 he was elected a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences.

Dr. Balasubramanian has served as a member of the Medical Science Research Committee of the CSIR (India), the Steering Committee for Medical Biotechnology (Neurosciences) of the DBT and the Programme Advisory Committee of DST.

During his career in CMC, 16 doctoral students have been mentored by him. Apart from being a brilliant scientist, Dr. Balasubramanian was an excellent teacher. Though he was a stickler for discipline in the laboratory his students respected him and had no reason to be dishonest with him. He is also a musician, mimic and cartoonist with a great sense of humour. The traditional tea-shop at the Staff entertainment has never been the same without him after his superannuation from CMC.

Mrs. Jyoti Balasubramanian was the Hindi teacher in Vidyalayam school for more than 20 years before she retired in 2004. She was respected for her pleasant disposition and cheerfulness despite difficulties and as someone who would only have nice things to say about others.

She was always punctual and systematic in everything she did, and for several years managed the Hindi programs in the Vidyalayam Variety Entertainment almost single handedly.

As a teacher, she was very committed to her profession and even after Dr. Balasubramaniam retired from CMC, Vellore and they moved to Viruthampet in Katpadi, she continued to teach in Vidyalayam, recognizing the school's need. Even though she was finding it increasingly difficult to travel out to Bagayam, she stayed on for as long as she could. Even during this time, she continued to be as punctual as when she stayed just next door to Vidyalayam.

Dr. & Mrs. Balasubramanian have two sons, both of whom studied in Vidyalayam and went on to do MBBS and post graduate training in CMC. Dr. Subramanian (batch of 1989) is a consultant radiotherapist and Dr. Krishnan (batch of 1992) is a consultant anaesthesiologist. During the school years of their sons, classmates and friends always loved to drop in to their home and enjoyed Mrs. Balasubramanian's hospitality. She would never fail to ask about the well-being of their families.

The Staff of CMC and alumni of Vidyalayam have a great amount of gratitude to Mrs. Balasubramaniam for the different ways she has contributed to the lives of the children on this campus.

In recognition of their immense contribution to education on our campuses and for the high quality of scientific research by Dr. Balasubramaian and the molding of young minds by Mrs. Balasubramanian, the Alumni Association is proud to confer the Alumni Award of Distinction to Dr. and Mrs. Balasubramian for the year 2013.