

From the Pages of History

Prof. B. Ramamurthi (1922-2003), The Pioneer Neurosurgeon

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Prof. B. Ramamurthi

Professor B. Ramamurthi (popularly known as BRM), was the pioneer Neurosurgeon, recognized as the Father of Indian Neurosurgery. He was born on 31st January, 1922 at Sirkali in Tamil Nadu. He completed his MBBS in 1943, MS (General Surgery) in 1947 from Madras Medical College and FRCS (Ed) thereafter. He was sent for training in Neurosurgery by the Government of Madras to Newcastle (UK) in 1949 at a time when Neurosurgery was not known in India. He was trained under Prof. G. F. Rowbotham at Newcastle. He also spent time with doyens of Neurosurgery like Prof. Geoffrey Jefferson (Manchester), Prof. Krayenbuhl (Zurich), Dr. Edward Busch (Copenhagen), Prof. Olivecrona (Stockholm) and Prof. Wilder Penfield (Montreal). He returned to Madras in 1950, bringing back with him the traditions of the British, American, Canadian and European schools of Neurosurgery and started Neurosurgery in Madras General Hospital and Madras Medical College on October 24th (Vijayadasami day). This was the second Neurosurgery department to be started in India (Prof. Jacob Chandy had started his department at Christian Medical College, Vellore a year earlier). Against great odds and difficulties, Dr B. Ramamurthi built and developed the neurosurgical department, which later developed into the Institute of Neurology at the Government General Hospital, where he was the Professor and Head till his retirement in 1978. After his retirement from the Government Service, he started the Dr. A. Lakshmi pathi Neurosurgical Centre, at the Voluntary Health Services Hospital, which he established in 1978. Both these centers have turned out to be institutes of academic excellence and are the major postgraduate neurosurgical training centers. He continued his untiring work till 2003, when he passed away on December 13th at the age of 81.

Major contributions to Neurosurgery and Neurosciences:

- He established Neurosurgery as a speciality in India, when very little was known about brain tumours and other surgical conditions of nervous system.
- He started Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery in Madras, along with his team comprising Drs. V. Balasubramaniam, S. Kalyanaraman, T. S. Kanaka and his Neurology colleagues Drs. G. Arjundas and K. Jagannathan. Madras Institute of Neurology became one of the major centers for Stereotactic Surgery and several pioneering original work was done here, which have won international acclaim.
- His work on the Surgery for Tuberculoma of brain, Angiographic appearance of brain tuberculoma, Delayed decompression for spinal cord injury, Management of growing fractures of skull are recognized internationally.
- He has trained many Neurosurgeons, who have won a place for themselves all over India and around the world.

- He along with Drs. Jacob Chandy, S. T. Narasimhan, and Baldev Singh started the Neurological Society of India (NSI) in 1951 at Madras and was its Founder-Secretary.
- He along with Prof. P.N.Tandon edited the Indian Textbook of Neurosurgery.
- He was instrumental in the establishment of the National Board of Examinations and National Brain Research Centre at Manesar, near Delhi.

Awards and Honours:

- He was awarded the prestigious Padma Bhushan, Dhanvantri awards and was made honorary Brigadier of the Indian Army.
- He was made Fellow of National Academy of Medical Sciences (1962), Fellow of the Academy of Sciences (1972), Fellow of the Indian National Science Academy (1981) and Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine of London (1983)
- He was the President of the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies in 1989.

References

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2. Sridhar K. Prof. B. Ramamurthi: The legend and his legacy. Neurol India 2004;52:27-31.

Perchlorate and IQ

It is a common knowledge that our environment carries a variety of potentially harmful chemicals. Many of these chemicals may accumulate within our blood leading to abnormally high levels. One such chemical is the common perchlorate. It is ubiquitous. Several earlier studies have established its anti-thyroid effect. It contaminates many foods and drinking water. The researchers from Boston University medical school, using the data from Controlled Antenatal Thyroid Study Cohort (Cats), examined 487 mother-child pairs and 50 women with highest perchlorate level in the body (Peter N Taylor et al. Maternal perchlorate levels in women with borderlinethyroid function during pregnancy and the cognitive development of their offspring; Data from the Controlled Antenatal Thyroid Study. The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism, 2014; jc.2014-1901) found that off-springs of such women have a subnormal IQ compared to controls. Earlier it was believed to be due to their hypothyroid state; now it appears to be due to abnormally high maternal perchlorate levels.

- Dr. K. Ramesh Rao