

Joy David (1927–2004)

On 20 April 2004, Joy David (nee Paul) passed away peacefully at her home in Bangalore. A chronic Type II diabetic patient, the long-term effects of the disease had affected her heart and had made her weak and dependent for the last several months. Just four days before her death, she called me to help one of her students get a job. I was deeply moved by her concern for the student, even when she knew that her health was fast deteriorating and she had perhaps only weeks or months to live. No wonder she was fortunate to have had the professional and moral support from her colleagues and students at the St. John's Medical College, Bangalore who were pillars of strength to her during her last days.

Joy David was born on 3 May 1927 at Palghat in Kerala. She had a remarkable and highly productive scientific and professional career, starting with an MBBS degree from the prestigious Christian Medical College, Vellore. She later did her postgraduate training with some of the stalwarts in the medical field, including Jacob Chandy and Baldev Singh in neurosurgery and J. C. David in pharmacology. It would appear that David had the most influence on her young mind (she later married Singaram, David's son), since she opted for superspecialization in that field. A Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship took her to the Montreal Neurology Centre where she laid the foundation of her foray into epilepsy research by developing a reliable model simulating Jacksonian epilepsy in *Macaca radiata*. A seminal piece of work followed when she moved to the University of Illinois Medical School in Chicago (1957–63) where she developed a mathematical model to quantify EEG responses to drug effects and characterized the cholinergic neuro-transmitter in the lateral geniculate

body. She returned to India, starry-eyed and full of hopes to contribute towards the establishment of, for the first time in India, a state-of-the-art research centre, in Mumbai in 1964. At the CIBA-Geigy Research Centre where she headed the Pharmacology Department for the next two decades, she set up outstanding facilities, including a primate laboratory with an implanted electrode model of petit mal epilepsy.



While her major job in the research centre was screening of molecules for discovery of new drugs, she also did fundamental research for understanding the finer nuances of the functioning of the brain and developing models for several neurological diseases, including depression, psycho-motor diseases, schizophrenia, anxiety neurosis and neuroleptosis. While her contribution to the development and marketing of the first-ever anti-depressant drug from Indian research, namely Sintamil, has been well recogni-

zed, what is not known to many is the fact that she was perhaps one of the first to identify the role of selective serotonin uptake inhibitors in depression, long before the blockbuster drug Fluoxetine, was launched in the global market.

After retirement from CIBA-Geigy Research Centre in 1985, she continued her research efforts as a Consultant to the Department of Pharmacology at St. John's Medical College. She guided students for MD and Ph D degrees in pharmacology and was involved in several projects, including pre-clinical and clinical development of anti-epileptic drugs. She continued her active interest in academic and applied research on drug discovery and development almost till the last days of her life. She has published over 80 original papers and a number of review articles in national and international journals.

During her two decades at Mumbai and almost another two decades at Bangalore, Joy had a wide circle of students, co-workers and friends who admired her for her compassion and consideration for others, amiable social manners, tremendous sense of honour and dedication to the profession and the people around her. There are not too many people, particularly in the scientific community, who are gifted enough to combine these qualities with high calibre intellectual and scientific capabilities. Joy was indeed one of the examples of that rare breed. She lost her husband in 2001. Her son lives in USA.

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