

**K. G. Nair (1931–2010)**

Kappiareth Gopal Nair who passed away on 12 March 2010 was an outstanding cardiologist, master teacher and investigator par excellence. Born in Kollengode, Kerala in 1931, he completed schooling in St Vincent's High School, Pune, and Inter Science in Fergusson College, where he topped the class and won many prizes. Drawn early to a physician's calling, he joined the Seth G.S. Medical College, Mumbai where he had a brilliant academic career, culminating in the receipt of MBBS and MD degrees from the Bombay University. Nineteen fifties, when he graduated in medicine, was an exciting decade in the development of cardiology worldwide, and Bombay was witness to the endeavour of pioneers in the new discipline led by Vakil and others. Given his love for the practice of medicine and equal passion for investigative medicine, it was inevitable that Nair should find the pull of cardiology irresistible in that exciting period. In contrast to the previous decade, which offered little for the care of cardiac patients, he saw in the fifties a glorious chapter ahead when electrophysiology, haemodynamic studies, coronary care units and advances in cardiac surgery promised to revolutionize the science and practice of cardiology. The turning point came when he received a Rotary Foundation Fellowship to serve under the legendary Paul White at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). His clinical skill and keen mind blossomed in the vibrant environment of MGH where he was appointed as an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Harvard University. During this period he was mainly involved in the study and applications of Vector Cardiography. His scientific talent and promise were soon spotted by Rabinowitz who invited him to his laboratory in the University of Chicago where he obtained a Ph D in

Physiology – an unusual distinction for a practising cardiologist. His doctoral work involved the purification of AMP by the hydrolysis of cyclic AMP, which received wide attention, and he was invited to join the National Institute for Medical Research in London as a Visiting Scientist. His paper on the study of ribosomes during the visit and subsequently in Chicago appeared in *Nature* (1966) and confirmed his dual status as a basic scientist and cardiologist of a high order. In the later part of his long association with Rabinowitz in Chicago, he took up the study of cardiac hypertrophy



and became a pioneer in looking at the molecular basis of this phenomenon. The seven papers which his group published on this important topic between 1966 and 1970 broke new ground in the study of cardiac hypertrophy which continues to be a thrust area for research in cardiology.

After his return to India in 1971, Nair joined his alma mater, Seth G.S. Medical College, as Director and Professor of Medicine, when he introduced the DM

programme in cardiology and a PhD programme in Applied Biology in that venerable institution. He quickly earned a name as a brilliant teacher and academician, and influenced the professional development of hundreds of young physicians over 10 years before moving to Jaslok Hospital and later, Hinduja Hospital as a cardiologist in an honorary capacity. His high reputation as a practising cardiologist did not diminish his interest in research, which led to his studies on the role of allopurinol and adenosine in cardiac surgery; of taurine in cardiomyopathy, the genetic basis of hyperlipidemia, and polymorphisms in the ACE and angiotensinogen gene. He had a genius for combining clinical practice and basic research in the right proportion, which characterized his entire career and made him a complete physician of his times.

Nair was a recipient of many honours and awards including the fellowships of the Indian Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Medical Sciences, American College of Cardiology and International College of Angiology. He was also elected the President of the Association of Physicians of India, Cardiological Society of India, and Indian Society of Electrocardiology. Owing to his excellence as a physician and investigator, he was much in demand as a speaker, examiner, mentor and an effective member of various official committees. He loved music and often found solace in the sound of Sitar.

Nair is survived by his wife Sumati, son Rajeev who is a surgeon, and daughter Sunita who is an astrophysicist.

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