Prof. B. Ramamurthi 1922-2003

Prof. B. Ramamurthi was born on January, 30th 1922 at Sirkali, a small town in Tamilnadu where his father Capt. T S Balasubramaniam was an Assistant Surgeon in the Government Hospital. He was a brilliant student at the E R High School and St Joseph’s College, Trichy, before he joined the Madras Medical College. He was awarded the Johnstone Gold medal as the Best Outgoing Student when he passed out of the Madras Medical College in 1943. He secured his Master of Surgery (M.S.) degree and his Fellowship to the Royal College of Edinburgh (FRCS) in 1947.

He was selected by the Madras Government for training in Neurosurgery and reached Newcastle, UK, on 2nd January 1949. He trained in the UK and then in Europe and Canada. On completing his training Dr. Ramamurthi returned to Madras, bringing back with him the traditions of the British, American, Canadian and European schools of neurosurgery. On October 24th 1950, Vijayadasami, Dr. Ramamurthi officially joined the Madras General Hospital and Madras Medical College as Assistant Surgeon in Neurosurgery and started the department of Neurosurgery. Dr. B. Ramamurthi built and developed the Institute of Neurology at the Government General Hospital, where he was the Professor and Head till his retirement in 1978. He was also the Principal of the Madras Medical College. He established neurosurgery on a firm footing in the country. He helped many young Neurosurgeons establish centers in various parts of the country. He started the first Head Injury Unit in the country. Under his leadership, Madras and India became famous for Stereotaxic Surgery in the 1960s and 1970s. It is a fact that he was so famous internationally, that any neurosurgeon going abroad was asked if he was from Ramamurthi’s country! He spread the message of Indian Neurosurgery throughout the world and gained honor and prestige for the country. Recognizing the need for establishing neurological sciences as a specialty, Dr. Ramamurthi along with Dr. Jacob Chandy, Dr. S T Narasimhan, and Dr. Baldev Singh started the Neurological Society of India in 1951 at Madras. He served as the founder secretary of the society and was also the founder editor of the society’s official journal, Neurology India. He however has the unique distinction of establishing the heading one more centre of excellence in the city of Madras, the Dr. A. Lakshmi心跳ithi Neurosurgical Centre, at the Voluntary Health Services Hospital.

In recognition of his services he received numerous awards including the Padma Bhushan from the Government of India, and the Dhanvantri Award. The Armed Forces of India conferred on him the title of Hony. Brigadier in the Army, for Services rendered to the armed forces. In 1989, he was made the Hony. President of the World Congress of Neurological Surgery. He was the senior most practicing Neurosurgeon of the world and was till his demise the Professor and Head of Dr. A. Lakshmipathi Neurosurgical Centre and Post-graduate Institute of Neurological Surgery, VHS and Malar Hospitals, Chennai.

He laid great emphasis on Medical Education, both undergraduate and post-graduate and was one of the founders of the National Board of Examinations. He was also the force behind the establishment of the National Brain Research Centre, Gurgaon, which was formally inaugurated by the President of India on 16th November 2003. He was the Editor of two editions of the Textbook of Neurosurgery and the forthcoming Text book of Operative Neurosurgery. He had hundreds of scientific publications to his credit. Prof. Ramamurthy was keenly interested in Sanskrit, Yoga and Vedic Culture, and Mathematics.

He was a man who has inspired thousands of physicians and surgeons, and has given hope and help to millions. He was never satisfied with his achievements. His favorite quote was:

“To reach the unreachable star
It is my quest to follow the star
No matter how hopeless, no matter how far”

The man from La Mancha (Don Quixote)

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