

## Dr. Bhatia's legacy in the development of immunohematology research in the country

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In this issue of the Journal 26<sup>th</sup>, Dr. H. M. Bhatia Memorial Oration delivered by Prof. Neelam Marwaha, PGIMER, Chandigarh has been published. Publishing this oration in the journal has fulfilled a long felt the need of bringing to the Hematologists and Immunohematologists of the country the oration, which has been delivered by some of the well-known national and international authorities in the field.

Life of Dr. H. M. Bhatia (1928–1988) has been briefly recorded in his obituary,<sup>[1]</sup> and recently in a biographical sketch.<sup>[2]</sup>

One often forgets that Dr. H. M. Bhatia not only led the foundation of present National Institute of Immunohematology in a nondescript one room area in KEM Hospital Blood Bank as blood group reference center (BGRC) and retired from this institute as its director shortly before his death in 1988.

Dr. H. M. Bhatia not only builds the Institute and mentored innumerable studies in the field of immunohematology, but he was also the tallest researcher in that field from our country. Dr. Bhatia's name in this country is associated with Bombay blood group, but his creative genius is spread in over more than 140 articles many of which were published in international journals.<sup>[3]</sup> Dr. Bhatia started with a very humble beginning. He had to leave his home land in Sindh Province of erstwhile Pakistan in 1947. Trauma and scar of partition was still fresh in his mind. Here, he completed his M.Sc. degree in Microbiology from University of Mumbai and joined as a technician in KEM Hospital Blood Bank. His subsequent rise in BGRC to the Directors post is very well-known. In his 140 articles, he left his creative genius in various facets of immunohematology and transfusion medicine. Following the discovery of Bombay blood group, he interacted with Dr. Boyd in Boston University, USA and completed his Ph.D. in studying the properties of H antigen and H substance from saliva. He developed in KEM Hospital

Blood Bank and in neighboring Nowrosjee Wadia Maternity Hospital, a center which did seminal studies on Rh isoimmunisation and developed as full-fledged facility of intra uterine red cell transfusion. Although conducting these studies, he described hemolytic disease of the newborn involving many red cell antigens. He also discovered in a blood group in Indian population along with his student Dr. S. S. Badakere, who was pursuing his doctoral research in this area. He actively looked for various lectins in both plant and animal world for possible development of blood group reagents. He was given the responsibility to develop a research program in red cell enzymology, which he did very efficiently with Dr. A. J. Baxi, human leukocyte antigens along with Dr. N. M. contractor and hemoglobinopathies work along with Dr. Roshan Colah. At present, NIIH has kept its national status in all these areas of hematology research in addition, so it's preeminent position in transfusion medicine research.

Once one of the authors of this editorial (KG) stumbled across a serum protein electropherogram of Dr. Bhatia showing monoclonal gammopathy. This electropherogram was preserved by one of his students Dr. Y. S. Iyer. On questioning him, I came to know that Dr. Bhatia used to inject sterilized secretor saliva to develop antibody against the secret or substance, I feel his monoclonal gammopathy may have been contributed by unusual immunization. This fact also clearly shows his scientific zeal and perfection for research. Students of immunohematology of India need to know about this simple living and high thinking savant in immunohematology research. Hence, it is to his memory his students and colleagues started Dr. Bhatia Memorial Oration in 1989. The idea was to honor National/International Scientists from the field of hematology/immunohematology every year.

Dr. P. M. Mannucci, Dr. David Nathan, Dr. S. Seidel are some of the international luminaries who has given this oration. Similarly, Dr. J. V. Undevia, Dr. B. C. Metha, Dr. K. C. Das, Dr. Dipika

Access this article online

Website: <a href="http://www.ajts.org">www.ajts.org</a>
DOI: 10.4103/0973-6247.130947
Quick Response Code:


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**Table 1: List of recipients of Dr. H. M. Bhatia Memorial Oration**

Year	Name
1989	Dr. Z. Bharucha, Mumbai
1990	Dr. J. V. Undevia, Mumbai
1991	Dr. S. Swarup Mitra, Kolkata
1992	Dr. G. N. Vyas, USA
1993	Dr. S. N. Naik, Mumbai
1994	Dr. K. C. Das, Kuwait
1995	Dr. B. C. Mehta, Mumbai
1996	Dr. S. Seidl, Germany
1997	Dr. M. Chandy, Vellore
1998	Dr. J. G. Jolly, Chandigarh
1999	Dr. S. J. Parekh, Mumbai
2000	Dr. S. L. Kate, Pune
2001	Dr. S. H. Advani, Mumbai
2002	Dr. V. Ray, Lucknow
2003	Dr. R. Pitchappan, Madurai
2004	Dr. T. Saikia, Mumbai
2005	Dr. S. R. Panjwani, Mumbai
2006	Dr. H. Kanno, Japan
2007	Dr. P. M. Mannucci, Italy
2008	Dr. V. Muthuswamy, New Delhi
2009	Prof. D. Nathan, USA
2010	Dr. D. Mohanty, Bhubaneswar
2011	Dr. I. C. Verma, New Delhi
2012	Dr. R. Krishnamorthy, France
2013	Dr. N. K. Mehra, New Delhi
2014	Dr. N. Marwaha, Chandigarh

Mohanty are some of the illustrious Indian scientists who have been honored by this oration. The list of all the recipients is shown in Table 1. Dr. Neelam Marwaha's oration is a reminder that in the subject of transfusion medicine we have to build a strong edifice in this country. Once this is done, we will not only improve the transfusion medicine service in this country, which was Dr. J. G. Jolly's dream, but we will also significantly improve immunohematology research, a legacy of Dr. H. M. Bhatia.

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**Cite this article as:** Ghosh K, Gorakshakar A. Dr. Bhatia's legacy in the development of immunohematology research in the country. *Asian J Transfus Sci* 2014;8:S1-2.

**Source of Support:** Nil, **Conflicting Interest:** None declared.