

## Dr. C.N. Sowmini



**Dr. C.N. Sowmini**  
**M.B., B.S., D.G.O., D.V., M.P.H (USA), Ph.D (Madras), FAMS**  
**DOB: 05-01-1922, DOD: 09-01-2012**

Dr. (Miss) Chedavachi Nelliath Sowmini, born on 5 January 1922, graduated from the Madras Medical College in 1940, and completed her Diploma in Obstetrics and Gynecology (D.G.O) soon after. She joined the service as an Assistant Surgeon at Vijayawada. She obtained the PG Diploma in Venereology from the Andhra Medical College, Vizag. Being the first lady Medical Officer to specialize in this field, she was offered a Fellowship by the World Health Organization (WHO), for further specialization in this field. At the prestigious School of John Hopkins University at Baltimore, (USA), she took her Masters Degree in Public Health, majoring in venereal diseases.

Having rejoined as Assistant Surgeon-cum-Tutor in Venereology under the Directorship of the World Famous Venereologist Dr. R.V. Rajam, she became the Associate Professor and later the Director of the Institute of Venereology, Madras Medical College, Madras, after Dr. P.N. Rangiah. When working under Dr. P.N. Rangiah she was awarded the Ph.D by the University of Madras for her thesis on the 'Epidemiological aspects of Venereal Diseases'.

In addition to being the Director of the Institute of Venereology, Madras Medical College, Madras,

(April 1970 – January 1978) she held the post of Superintendent of Government General Hospital, Madras, the first woman Medical Superintendent (1973 – 1977),

As Director she elevated the glory of the Institute to higher levels. Under her guidance, a number of schemes were sanctioned by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), apart from the already ongoing schemes of the ICMR in Central Venereal Diseases (VD) Reference Laboratory at the Institute.

Dr. C.N. Sowmini was appointed to the Twenty-eighth World Health Assembly, Geneva, to represent the developing countries on Venereal Diseases. She had represented India in the WHO as an expert advisory committee member on Gonorrhoea and Treponematosi. She was also sent to Bangkok by the WHO for an epidemiological survey. Her selfless service as a member of the advisory committee on VD to the Government of Tamilnadu and Government of India are worth mentioning.

A number of surveys for the prevalence of VD and Yaws in the hills of Tamilnadu and in the back water area (Thyagavalli Panchayathi near Cuddalore) were carried out during her Directorship. The Second VD and Yaws Conference was held by the Government of India during her period. Special mention should also be made on the 'Seminar on Hospital Housekeeping', held for the Hospital Doctors and Engineers of the Public Works Department, which she conducted during her period as Superintendent. She has contributed both as an author and co-author for more than fifty publications. After retirement she was appointed as an Emeritus Professor and also as an Emeritus Scientist of ICMR.

Dr. C. N. Sowmini was honored in 2000, with a 'Life Time Award' in academics, jointly by Anna University and the Science City at the Anna University, Chennai. In 2004, the International Union against Sexually Transmitted Infection (IUSTI) Congress honored her with the 'IUSTI Senior Fellowship' Award at Bangkok.

Having felt the need to have a separate association for this Speciality, she was instrumental in starting the 'Indian Association for the Study of Sexually

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Transmitted Diseases' (IASSTD) in 1975, which was later changed to 'IASSTD and AIDS'. After serving as the President of the Association for eight years, stabilizing it, and bringing recognition to the Association, she relinquished the post of President, giving a chance to youngsters to carry the torch. Having felt the need of her services and guidance for the Association, the members of the association nominated her as a PATRON in 1983.

She was also instrumental in organizing the 'Women Doctors' Association of Tamilnadu and Pondicherry'. After serving as the President, she was a Patron for this Association also.

She was active till a few years back and concerned about the Speciality. She was a good Teacher, Guide, Philosopher, and Friend to her students. She expired

on the morning of 9 January, 2012, but she will live forever in the minds of all the members of our association. The Members of the Association are indebted to the services rendered by her both to the Association and Speciality.

May her soul rest in peace

P. Elangovan

Secretary, Indian Association for the study of STD & AIDS  
(IASSTD)

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