

A tribute to Prof. Madan Mohan: Pioneer of corneal transplant surgery in India



Figure 1: Prof. Madan Mohan MS, FACS, FAMS

Dear Editor,
Prof. Madan Mohan MS, FACS, FAMS, passed away on June 6, 2021 [Fig. 1]. He had trained several corneal surgeons during his tenure as the Chief of Dr. R. P. Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, AIIMS, New Delhi, and was a pioneer of corneal transplant surgery in India.

Birth in the Family of Ophthalmologists

Prof. Madan Mohan was born in the family of ophthalmologists at Mardan (Pakistan) on May 14, 1929. His grandfather, Dr. Ram Chand, and his father, Dr. Sewa Ram, were ophthalmologists and their family-owned 50-bed eye hospital.

Medical Training from Premier Medical Institutes

Prof. Madan Mohan completed his schooling at Lahore, Rawalpindi and received his MBBS in 1954 from King George's Medical College (KGMC), Lucknow, UP. In 1960, he joined the faculty of the Department of Ophthalmology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi. This position provided him with a unique opportunity to practice anterior segment microsurgical procedures as well as to conduct research on corneal grafting and eye banking.

In 1963, Prof. Mohan continued his study of corneal surgical techniques during his year-long Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship at various hospitals in the United Kingdom, United States, and France.

Establishing National Eye Bank at the AIIMS, New Delhi

Prof. Madan Mohan set up the National Eye Bank at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences on his return to India in

1964. Sir Benjamin Rycroft inspired him the most as a mentor and guided him at every step. He pursued the sub-specialty with passion and trained many corneal surgeons.

In addition to establishing the National Eye Bank, Prof. Mohan started microsurgery and intraocular lens (IOL) implantation residency training programs and ophthalmic technician training courses during his three decades of tenure at the Dr. Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, AIIMS, New Delhi.^[1] He was also the adviser for ophthalmology to the Ministry of Health for the Government of India and was instrumental in getting the Eye Banking Act passed by the Indian Parliament in 1984. The act helped promote and popularize eye donation, and therefore, increased corneal transplantations.

Leadership Role in Ophthalmology

Among his other numerous accomplishments are serving as the President of the All India Ophthalmological Society (AIOS) in 1988, Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for training workforce in Southeast Asia during the 1980s, and Editor of the Indian Journal of Ophthalmology (IJO). During his tenure at the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), New Delhi, Prof. Madan Mohan had contributed over 150 scientific papers in national and international journals.

Prof. Madan Mohan established the M.M. Eyetech Institute of Ophthalmology in New Delhi after he retired as the chief and professor of ophthalmology of the Dr. R.P. Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, AIIMS, New Delhi in 1989. His son Dr. Rishi Mohan, daughter-in-law Dr. Indira Mohan, and an excellent team of ophthalmologists are currently running the M. M. Eye Tech Institute and providing cutting-edge ophthalmic services.

Recognition by the Government of India

The Government of India recognized Prof. Mohan's contribution in ophthalmology and service to the nation and honored him with the fourth-highest civilian award, the Padma Shri, in an investiture ceremony by the President of India in 1985.

As we pay tribute to this visionary ophthalmologist, his contribution to ophthalmology in his own words

"I have performed to my best potential and am fully satisfied as a 'Karm Yogi' in the fight against corneal blindness".

Prof. Madan Mohan was a real Karm Yogi and the departure of Prof. Madan Mohan is a big loss to the ophthalmic fraternity. Prof. Madan Mohan's passing should not be seen as the end of an era but a promise for a generation of young ophthalmologists to become ophthalmic (as well as corneal) surgeons inspired by his example to seek to understand their patients and to unravel the causes of blindness, for which as yet there are no answers.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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