

CITATION FOR Prof Rajmohan Nambiar



Text by Prof London Lucien Ooi

Prof Rajmohan Nambiar graduated in 1956 with a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBBS) from Andhra University in India and obtained his first Fellowship of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons from the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh six years later. He went on to attain many other fellowships, including from the Academy of Medicine, Singapore (AMS); the Royal College of Surgeons of England; the American College of Surgeons; the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons; and the Academy of Medicine, Malaysia.

After a short stint as a house surgeon and later tutor in surgery in India, Prof Nambiar went to England, UK first as a senior house officer and later as a registrar, before returning to Singapore in 1964 to take on the position of medical officer at the then Department of Surgery B Unit at Singapore General Hospital (SGH). He quickly moved up the ranks to become consultant in just four years before assuming headship in the Department of Surgery at Toa Payoh Hospital, then also known as Thomson Road General Hospital. In 1985, Prof Nambiar returned to SGH as head of Department of Surgery B Unit, and later the Department of General Surgery.

A lifetime of achievements

To try to mention all of Prof Nambiar's achievements would be impossible in this short time given for the citation. As this citation is for the SMA Honorary Membership, I think it would be appropriate to highlight his achievements that affect the greater Singaporean medical community rather than surgeons alone. Prof Nambiar has contributed significantly to improving and enhancing clinical standards and medical training and education in Singapore.

In the clinical practice of surgery, Prof Nambiar's greatest achievements would have started from his time in Toa Payoh Hospital when he was the head of department. To achieve clinical excellence in his department, he combined good teaching and training with the motivation for his staff to do research. His leadership in this area was by personal example, and he transformed Toa Payoh Hospital into a popular surgical unit for training and postgraduate education, with turnaround improvements in overall morbidity and mortality of high-risk operations, and markedly improved

patient and staff satisfaction ratings. Prof Nambiar's success with strengthening the surgery unit in Toa Payoh Hospital was continued when he implemented a similar practice model upon his return to SGH as head of Department of Surgery B Unit in 1985.

With a special interest in gastrointestinal and cancer surgery, Prof Nambiar has also been a key part of the Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) since 1972, serving in various capacities including as chair of the Medical and Research Advisory Committee, National Workshop on Cancer Screening, and member of the Singapore Cancer Registry Advisory Committee before finally becoming the chairman of the SCS in 2000.

In education, Prof Nambiar started as a clinical teacher in 1964 at the National University of Singapore (NUS), before becoming associate professor in 1983 and later professor in 1991. He has personally taught the finer aspects of surgery to many of us here today. I still remember fondly the time I spent in Toa Payoh Hospital during my first surgery posting as a third year NUS medical student, and I believe that was what started my personal journey into general surgery as well. Prof Nambiar

was an examiner in surgery for the MBBS examinations at NUS from 1972 to 2014, so many of us here would have encountered him as a firm but fair examiner. He has also been extensively involved in specialists' training in various capacities, and has in many ways been steering the training and assessments of general surgeons since 1984. He was instrumental in setting up the Master of Medicine in Surgery programme which continues till today. Prof Nambiar has also held various appointments in the Ministry of Health for training, including being on the Specialist Accreditation Board and the Steering Committee for Joint Examinations with the American Board of Medical Specialists, and is an advisor to the National Review Committee on Residency Training.

Institutional contributions

As for professional organisations in Singapore, Prof Nambiar has been actively involved in two key institutions: AMS and the Singapore Medical Council (SMC).

In AMS, he was chair of the Chapter of Surgeons from 1973 to 1976 and has also chaired various committees, including the Joint Committee for Advanced Specialty Training, and other committees on medical research, constitution review

and congresses. He also held various roles such as bedel, bursar, scribe and assistant master, before becoming master of the Academy from 1990 to 1992.

Prof Nambiar has been on the SMC since 1999 and was SMC president from 2005 to 2008. He has chaired the Implementation Committee for Accreditation of House Officers and the Complaints Committee, served as chair of the Review Committee for Disciplinary Procedures, and as a member of the Task Force for Accreditation of Training for House Officers.

In recognition of all his contributions, Prof Nambiar has won numerous awards and accolades, including the Public Administration Medal in 1978 and the Public Service Star in 2008. He has also been recognised with honorary fellowships with the American College of Physicians, the Royal Australasian Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Philippine College of Surgeons, and been recognised by numerous international bodies and academic institutions, including being president of the Asian Surgical Association from 1983 to 1985, and councillor of the International Society of Surgery from 1997 to 2001.

Prof Nambiar remains active in the medical community and continues to work as a sessional consultant at Tan Tock Seng Hospital and SGH, emeritus consultant at Changi General Hospital and clinical professor at NUS.

I know I have not even covered 1% of what is on Prof Nambiar's CV, but I would like to end this citation by saying that it has indeed been an honour to have been his student first, then surgical trainee and now mentee for almost 40 years. Prof Nambiar is undoubtedly an icon of general surgery in Singapore. The conferment of the SMA Honorary Membership is indeed an appropriate addition to his many accolades, and I am sure all of you in the audience today will concur.

It is my honour to present to you Prof Rajmohan Nambiar for the SMA Honorary Membership. ♦

Legend

1. Prof London Lucien Ooi delivering the citation on stage
2. Honorary Membership recipient Prof Rajmohan Nambiar (centre) with Prof Kenneth Mak and Dr Ng Chee Kwan

