

Prof. SKC: Donning many hats with élan

“Even people who were not there remembered vividly exactly what happened next.”

- Joseph Heller, *Catch-22*

Patron saint of humour and a fan of Catch 22 statements, Prof. Santosh Kumar Chaturvedi joined NIMHANS as a lecturer in psychiatry in the year 1982 after completing his MD from PGIMER, Chandigarh. Many of us were not there when he joined but I am told he was like a breath of fresh air with his wry humour and a ‘new PGI approach’ to teaching and patient care.

His Persona

Prof. SKC as he is fondly called (he insists it is Sweet-Khara-Coffee), is known for his affable nature, his propensity to call a spade a spade, and of course his ability to lighten even the most serious discussion. Almost all Directors at NIMHANS would seek his counsel and advice (of which he has a lot to offer, especially on rules and procedures). His spontaneous one liners and his very British manner of being able to laugh at himself is his signature style!

A Teacher and Mentor

Students look forward to his rounds knowing that he will always have a different way of looking at patients or a subject. He is one clinician who is not hesitant to make a diagnosis of ‘Nil Psychiatric Problem’ and who encourages his trainees to think differently and not be too ready to slot patients into diagnostic pigeon holes.

Many trainees have had their first tryst with writing a scientific paper with Prof. SKC and will always remember it as defining point of their professional lives. His teaching has always been innovative and he was one of the first to start interactive and participatory teaching in the department. The OSCE teaching in Unit 4 was started under his tutelage

and has been a very popular program among students for learning the nuances of dialogue between patients and professionals.

He is one of the few in the country to have conducted research on teaching methods in psychiatry and his Ethics Teaching modules are much sought after. Always one to encourage questions, he has been a role model for many senior residents in the way he handles difficult to treat patients and their families.

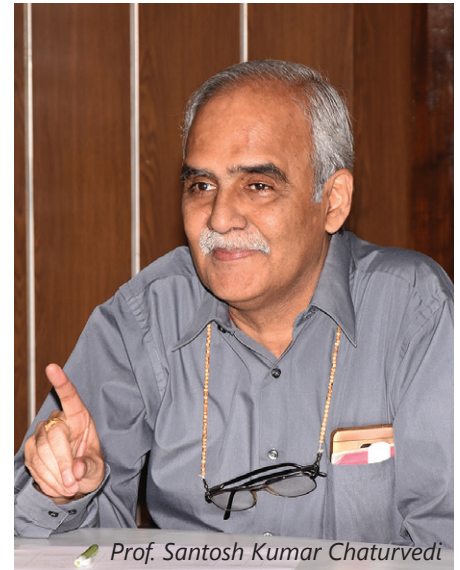
He initiated the Consultation Liaison program in the department and was also instrumental in starting the Post-Doctoral fellowship programs in psychiatry.

Psycho-oncology, Palliative Care and Pain

A pioneer in the country in the above areas, he is one of the most sought after trainers in communication skills for doctors and nurses in cancer care and has trained hundreds of them in his life time using innovative teaching methods. Following his Commonwealth Fellowship in the UK, and mentored by Prof. Peter Maguire, he has conducted numerous workshops in India and abroad on Breaking Bad News and Handling Difficult Questions in End of Life Care. He is the most widely published psychiatrist in India and has been a guide to many scholars in the area. For his research Prof. SKC has received several prestigious ICMR and Indian Psychiatric Society awards.

Many Mantles and Always ‘In-Charge’

Prof. SKC has had the unique distinction of being the Head of three departments - Psychiatry, Mental Health Education and Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services. He has been the member secretary of the RN Moorthy Foundation, the Hostel Warden, Dean- Behavioural Sciences,



Prof. Santosh Kumar Chaturvedi

and on many occasions- ‘In-charge MS, In-charge Registrar and In-charge Director’. And, he is now part of the statutory bodies of NIMHANS. As HOD he started the Academic Oscars in the Department and was also instrumental in NIMHANS signing an MOU with the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

As Dean he will be remembered for starting departmental IECs for student theses- a brilliant idea that enhanced efficiency and saved time. He has also worked closely with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, GOI and has been part of several Task Forces including those for suicide prevention and COVID 19 and Mental Health.

He has been the ‘Go To’ person for juniors and seniors alike for strategy, policies, rules and managing crises.

Publishing and Writing

Prof. SKC is a prolific writer and has nearly 600 scientific publications, edits a journal and has 25 + books. His papers range from writing about esoteric topics like ‘Psychobathology’ (why patients with schizophrenia don’t bathe) to several seminal papers on quality of life in various disorders.

continued on page 8

continued from page 7

The hidden side of Prof. SKC

A poet, a priest, a theatre artist, an impromptu comedian, a doting grandfather and a dog lover- he is a big fan of the Beatles, James Bond, Rajesh Khanna films and the Godfather Trilogy.

Thank You Prof. SKC for your leadership and for your foresight, wisdom and vision and most of all your advice to all of us- Learn and Work with Fun! You will be missed.

His latest one liner when talking on Loksabha TV about COVID 19 and

preventive behaviours, in keeping with his filmi style - "Jo Dar Gaya, Woh Bach Gaya". ■

Dr. Prabha Chandra
Professor of Psychiatry

The Juggler's Illustrious Spell

Prof. SKC is a multi-faceted personality. A scholar with eclectic tastes, he has donned many hats and each with full heart, passion and enthused energy.

Prof. SKC, who took charge as the Head of the Department of Mental Health Education in December 2015, always pushed for a lot of newer initiatives. Hosting national-level conferences, starting fellowship program and certificate courses, launching social media campaigns, bringing out the Journal of Mental Health Education, initiating community awareness programs like walking tour of NIMHANS, establishing Media Cell, etc. form some of the vital undertakings.

He was a perfect mentor, for the students and the faculty members alike: a role model one could look up to. He never turned down ideas, but always allowed them to blossom, and even gave inputs to nurture them.

Despite his busy schedule as the Dean of Behavioural Sciences or many a time as in-charge Director, he always ensured that he visited the department regularly, oversaw the activities, and perked up the atmosphere with his sparkling wit and amazing sense of humor. He envisioned the department to reach greater heights through innovation, harnessing new technologies and social media platforms.



During the initial days of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown, there was a rise in mental health concerns and stigma in the community. The taskforce established under the chairmanship Prof. SKC was responsible for publishing a series of awareness posters, brochures and videos, for the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India. These initiatives garnered appreciation from the Ministry and various quarters, pushing the department to the forefront. It was because of his encouragement that we could successfully bring out a special issue of the Journal on COVID-19 and Mental Health. He gave all of us a lot of freedom to explore and innovate ideas for promoting mental health and improving mental health literacy. Every interaction with him was rewarding, truly motivating and empowering. We were really lucky

to work under such a simplistic human being.

Prof. SKC possesses a rare combination of deep vision, fairness to all, and understanding—quintessential traits of a true leader. His endearing ability to keep the staff united in a harmonious way is another testimony to that.

We know retirement isn't going to slow him down or stop him from achieving many more he intends to. So, we wish him all the best in his new endeavours and look forward to seeing him achieve greater heights.

Dr. K.S. Meena
Additional Professor & HoD

Dr. K. Latha
Assistant Professor
Department of Mental Health
Education, NIMHANS

A NIMHANS information initiative.

For contributions to the bulletin, contact Publication Department
(email: publicn@nimhans.ac.in | Phone: 080-26995036)

All the contributions should be sent by 25th of every month.

Back issues of NIMHANS Bulletin are available at <http://nimhans.ac.in>

