



Dear Members,

The month of May has brought a great deal of grief to our association due to the passing of two senior members of IPA, Mr. M. R. Shastri, and Dr. J. N. Banerjee. Shri M. R. Shastri passed away on May 3 at the ripe age of 97. He served the food and drug control administration of Gujarat for 28 years and retired as the Director of FDCA. He was a very active member of IPA playing significant roles in the Vadodara local branch and the Gujarat State Branch. He was a trustee of the B. V. Patel Education Society for several years. His services to the profession of Pharmacy were recognized by the IPA and he was awarded the M. L. Khorana Memorial Lecture Award in 1994, The Fellowship of IPA in 2000 and the IPA-Ramanbhai Patel Foundation's (IRF) Life Time Achievement award in 2003.

*We, pharmacists, continue to struggle to convince the government about the importance of having pharmacists at the point of contact between patient and the medicines be it in the community setting or in the hospital setting.*

Dr. J. N. Banerjee, IPA's Past President and a long-standing member of the Board of Trustees of the Bombay College of Pharmacy, passed away on May 11, 2017. Dr. J. N. Banerjee was a visionary and rendered great service to the development of IPA, the Bombay College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Industry in India. He was the Managing Director of Sandoz India Ltd. until his retirement. He was also the founder member of OPPI (the organization of the pharmaceutical producers of India), which was established in the year 1965. Dr. Banerjee served the Indian Pharmaceutical Association in various capacities. He was the Honorary General Secretary of IPA from 1954 to 56 and again from 1960-70. He became the vice president of the IPA in 1970 and served in that capacity for 2 terms following which he was the elected president of IPA for the 1974-76 term. Dr. J. N. Banerjee received the Prof. M. L. Khorana Memorial Lecture award of IPA in 1985, the fellowship of IPA in 1994 and was the recipient of the coveted Eminent Pharmacist award of IPA in 1995. Dr. Banerjee was conferred the IRF Life Time Achievement Award in 2006. In the passing of these two stalwarts of IPA, the Association has lost great luminaries and may their noble souls rest in peace.

Last week, I was invited to attend the 6<sup>th</sup> Healthcare Access Summit organized by the OPPI on the topic 'policies and practices: best practices in NCDs'. This meeting was very well organized and very well attended. The meeting had Pharma industry, government representatives, Service providers like hospitals and health care providers, consumer protection agencies actively participating. Very exciting ideas and path forwards were presented and discussed. The OPPI president suggested that Industry must adopt a few primary care centers in a few states in collaboration with state governments to provide better care to patients with NCDs to prove that pharma industry in collaboration with the government can make a huge difference. Honorable Minister for state of H&FW, Ms. Anupriya Patel gave an account of government initiatives such as the 3000 + NCD centers established at several community health centres across the country. Ms. Sangita Reddy, Joint MD, Apollo Hospitals, mentioned that the burden of NCDs increases exponentially with greater industrialization. She suggested erasing the boundaries between manufacturing industry and service providers like hospitals, healthcare providers both government or private to make a single entity, which provides easily accessible answers to patient's problems and issues. Mr. K. L. Sharma, Jt Secretary, Ministry of H&FW mentioned that the government feels that medicines should be regulated and monitored continuously to prevent the ill effects of under usage, wrong usage, or over usage of medicines and this can be achieved by regulation through an electronic portal. He also emphasized the need to classify drugs as OTC and prescription drugs with special categories for antibiotics & antimicrobials, and narcotics & habit forming drugs. There were also significant discussions on leveraging digital technology to improve healthcare access and outcomes, importance of integrated disease management, collaborations, scaling up and lack of universal health coverage all in the context of averting the impending NVD disaster. Sadly the role of the pharmacist in the better management of NCDs and that without pharmacist intervention all these approaches might not yield the expected results was ignored. We, pharmacists, continue to struggle to convince the government about the importance of having pharmacists at the point of contact between patient and the medicines be it in the community setting or in the hospital setting. Let us all work together to gain the much-awaited recognition of the pharmacist in our country.

*V.V. Vadlamudi Rao*

Rao V. S. V. Vadlamudi, Ph. D.,