

Zarin Soli Bharucha

(1940-2021)

Doyen of Transfusion Medicine and a living legend is how many would describe her. A reservoir of knowledge she was a friend, mentor and guide to all in the Transfusion fraternity. Her innumerable contributions, knowledge, versatility, leadership and passion make her a legendary figure.

Born Zarin Gyara she graduated in Medicine from the prestigious G.S. Medical College in Mumbai. Whilst medicos generally choose a speciality, in her case the speciality chose her to be on the path. Preferring a full time job considering her family responsibilities she started off her career in Tata Blood Bank, J.J. Hospital, Mumbai as Blood Bank officer in 1966. She later completed her post-graduation in Pathology from T.N. Medical College, Mumbai in 1974. Given immediate responsibility thereafter as Officer In-Charge of the Blood Bank one of her first decisions was to do away with the paid donor programme and replace it with voluntary donations. She also started Component processing in 1974 and Apheresis programme in 1981, one of the firsts in the country.

Subsequently, after a short stint of 3 years as Blood Transfusion Specialist in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia she served Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai from 1988 till her superannuation in year 2000, as Professor and Head, Department of Transfusion Medicine. Her pioneering efforts to carve out Transfusion Medicine as a distinct post-graduate speciality in India bore fruit just before the turn of the century. She contributed immensely in shaping and nurturing the speciality in due course.

During her illustrious career of more than five decades she was a Consultant to WHO and played a stellar role in improving Blood Transfusion Services (BTS) in several countries. She worked indefatigably towards modernising BTS in India and added many reforms. She played an important role in framing our country's National Blood Policy, being a member of the Expert Committee, Govt. of India for formulating a report on National BTS to be submitted to Supreme Court.

She held several important official positions including President of Indian Society of Blood Transfusion and Immunohaematology (ISBTI), Indian Society of Haematology and Blood Transfusion (ISHBT) and Bombay Haematology Group (BHG), Chairperson of Transfusion Sub-committee of Indian Red Cross Society, Mumbai and Regional Councillor, South East Asia of the International Society of Blood Transfusion (ISBT). She was a member of several Expert groups/panels, Task Forces, Governing Councils and several Government committees/ bodies related to Transfusion speciality. A recipient of innumerable Orations and Fellowship awards, she was the Founder member of Society for Prevention of AIDS and South Asian Society on Atherosclerosis and Thrombosis (SASAT). She also founded the Federation of Bombay Blood Banks (FBBB) in 1980 and continued as its Chairperson till her demise.

She has drafted several books for WHO such Safe blood, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in Blood Bank, Designs for Blood Centre, Blood donor selection and many more. In 1990 she authored the book Introduction to Transfusion Medicine, which is still read for its exemplary and comprehensive coverage of basic concepts, a book on Organisation and Management of the Transfusion Services and more recently the Textbook of Laboratory and Clinical Transfusion Medicine.

A visionary, her humane personality, her elegance and charm, her compassion and affectionate nature, her unmatched energy, passion and perseverance are all worthy of emulation in our lives.

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