

A Giant of Indian Pharmacology is No More: Rest in Peace Prof. B. N. Dhawan

On June 16, 2017, Prof. B. N. Dhawan, one of the giants of Indian Pharmacology for more than four decades, breathed his last.

Prof. B. N. Dhawan joined the MBBS course in 1949 at KG Medical College, Lucknow. Later on, he was appointed as a demonstrator in pharmacology in September 1954 after finishing MBBS. In September 1963, he moved to MLN Medical College, Allahabad, a newly started college, as a professor to establish the Department of Pharmacology. He spent 3 months as senior commonwealth medical fellow at St Bartholomew's Medical College, London, in the summer of 1971. He occupied several important positions in both government agencies and academic institutions rising through the ranks to become director at the Central Drug Research Institute, an autonomous institute of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Government of India, from where he retired.

He played a leading role in establishing the Indian Pharmacological Society (IPS) in Patna in 1967 and was its founder fellow of IPS. He was conferred fellowships by several national and international organizations and delivered many prestigious orations. He was a member of numerous academic bodies including the British Pharmacological Society, Medicinal Chemistry Section of American Chemical Society, and International Brain Research Organization.

He had published over 350 research papers, obtained 20 foreign and 32 Indian patents. He had written or edited 20 books. He received many prestigious awards, namely, the Third World Academy of Sciences Award in Medical Sciences, Hamdard Foundation Research Award, Vasvik Life Sciences Award, Ranbaxy Medical Sciences Award, OP Bhasin Medical and Health Sciences Award, DN Prasad Memorial Award of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), and Dhanwantari Prize of INSA.

He was head of the ICMR Center for Advanced Studies on Traditional Remedies at Lucknow and visiting professor at several foreign universities. He was also a consultant and a committee member of several prestigious international bodies such as the IUPHAR, UNIDO, WHO, and UNESCO. He was a member or chairman of many committees set up by the various ministries. He was also associated in various capacities with the CSIR, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, and ICMR. He was appointed as the honorary board of director and committee member of several public and private sectors of pharmaceutical undertakings.

My first interaction with this great personality was during the Tridecennial (30th) Annual meeting of IPS in Jammu in 1997. The next year, Prof. K. C. Singhal, head of our Department

of Pharmacology, invited him as a resource person for the International Workshop on ADR Monitoring at JNMC, AMU, Aligarh, when I got to know and interact with him closely. I used to admire his in-depth knowledge of the subject and the way he addressed and approached academic meetings and issues. He was a regular participant of the IPS and Indian Academy of Neuroscience meetings. Though I was very much junior, the manner in which he used to treat me whenever we met or corresponded made me reserve a special place in my heart.

On June 2, 2007, he wrote an E-mail to me with a message that he was assigned to write Biographies of Member Fellows of INSA including Prof. P. N. Saxena (1925–1999),^[1] a former faculty member of our Department of Pharmacology and requested me to provide the details of Prof. Saxena, as he could not find much details elsewhere. I provided him the information which he wanted in addition to some original reprints of his publications. After the publication, Prof. Dhawan had very kindly acknowledged me as follows: “The author is grateful to Archives of the Academy (INSA) and Dr. Syed Ziaur Rahman of Department of Pharmacology, JN Medical College (Aligarh), for providing many biographical details, partial list of publications, and photograph of Professor Saxena.”^[2] Prof. Dhawan was so impressed with my gesture that, one day, he wanted to visit my house to see our collection on medical heritage. On August 25, 2007, he, along with Prof. P. K. Seth (former director, CSIR-ITRC), visited my place and appreciated our efforts in establishing the “Ibn Sina Academy of Medieval Medicine and Sciences” in Aligarh. In the visitors' book of the Academy, he wrote, “It has been an exhilarating experience to see this unique and extensive collection of old manuscripts covering Unani Medicine, perhaps the best in the country. It must be preserved as a national heritage and many manuscripts need urgent digitization. We should be grateful for building this by their own efforts and they need all help and support in this unique institution. My grateful thanks for letting us go through it and best wishes for proper utilization and conservation of this invaluable heritage.”

Probably, his last academic meeting was at Golden Jubilee Inaugural Conference of IPS held at Patna in February 2017. Prof. Dhawan was as active as he was in 1967 in the same city. He will be badly missed by all of us. The Organizing Committee of ISRPTCON 2017 has decided to dedicate the upcoming conference, scheduled to be held in Aligarh from November 19 to 21, 2017,^[3] to the memory of late Prof. B. N. Dhawan, a pharmacologist incomparabilis, and a role model for aspiring young pharmacologists in the years to come. May his soul rest in peace.

Rahman: B. N. Dhawan

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Access this article online

Quick Response Code:



Website:

www.jpharmacol.com

DOI:

10.4103/jpp.JPP_105_17

How to cite this article: Rahman SZ. A giant of indian pharmacology is no more: Rest in peace Prof. B. N. Dhawan. J Pharmacol Pharmacother 2017;8:151-2.

Received: 15-07-2017 **Revised:** 01-08-2017 **Accepted:** 16-08-2017