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- PROF EMERITUS OBSTETRICS & GYNAECOLOGY
NOWROSJEE WADIA MATERNITY HOSPITAL
- PRESIDENT FEDERATION OF OBST & GYNAE SOCIETIES OF INDIA - 1996
- PRESIDENT OF INDIAN SOCIETY OF PRENATAL DIAGNOSIS AND THERAPY
- HON. MEDICAL DIRECTOR
FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF INDIA
- CONSULTANT - BREACH CANDY HOSPITAL
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Dr. Hema Purandare - The pioneer in the field of genetics in India

Since I was interested in the then upcoming field of genetics, I was introduced to Dr. Hema in early 80s when she had started the first private genetic service centre in India. She has been trained with many internationally acclaimed geneticists, such as the father of medical genetics Dr. Victor McKusick and Nobel laureate Sir Robert Edwards, and her passion for the subject and the resolution to keep herself abreast of the latest developments in the evolving field of science and technology are amazing.

With her relentless efforts, she makes the latest facilities available to the patients of all age groups throughout their lifecycle, in all the branches of medicine including cancer. Her centre has acquired prestigious accreditations like National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) and College of American Pathologists (CAP's) which endorse the quality of services offered by her.

Her desire to spread awareness for better patient care is incredible. In a few years of our professional association, she came to me with her brainchild - ISPAT - the Indian Society for Prenatal Diagnosis and Therapy. Since genetics is not taught with a specific emphasis in medical graduate and postgraduate courses, there were no facilities for training people in this new clinical specialty in the late 1980s. Thus, she suggested that a multidisciplinary society should be established with like-minded doctors, scientists and philanthropist, to educate and train those who wish to handle high risk pregnant patients and families in their practice and were interested in diagnosis, as well as management and further prevention of birth defects of genetic and non-genetic origin. I was elected as the president and Dr. Hema was elected as the vice president of the Inaugural Managing Committee for the years 1989 - 92.

ISPAT intends to work tirelessly at all levels to promote the idea of prenatal diagnosis and therapy, with the goal of preventing genetic diseases. With this in mind, Dr. Hema is involved in raising public awareness about genetics and birth defects by giving lectures at medical and public forums, authoring

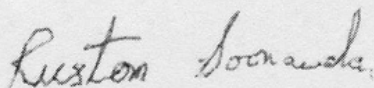
books for physicians and non-physicians, writing in the press, and doing live interviews on television shows.

ISPAT holds Biennial National Conference, and several workshops pan India. Our efforts in this regard were appreciated by the international society for prenatal diagnosis and we were given an opportunity to host the 8th international conference – 'prenatal diagnosis and therapy' at Goa in 1996 to share and exchange ideas with our Indian fraternity and with Dr. Hema's determined efforts many international stalwarts like Dr. Joe Simpson, Dr. B. Brambati, Dr. Guy Bisle, and Dr. John Old honoured us with their gracious participation.

Dr. Hema took over as the president of the society and a conference - 'let us prevent birth defects' - was hosted at Mahabaleshwar, Maharashtra in 2006 under her presidency. She not only actively carried the helm of the society with her team but selflessly offered her own place at Mumbai on rent free lease to be used as the office by ISPAT & its staff for as long as a decade.

With the herculean endeavours of people like Dr. Hema, today, genetics is assisting all medical professionals in diagnosing all systemic anomalies from fetal stage to adulthood, determining the causes of recurrent pregnancy losses, and preventing the spread of diseases such as Thalassemia in particular in India through carrier screening.

Thanks and Regards,



Dr Rustom P. Soonawala

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