

PIONEERS IN RHEUMATOLOGY

Dr. KT Dholakia: Pioneer of Joint Replacement Surgery in India

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Dr. Kandarp Tuljashankar Dholakia was born on 12th August 1920, in Rajkot, Gujrat. His father was a teacher and mother, Sukhwa Ben was the homemaker. He lost his father at the age of two years and was brought up by his maternal uncle who was a doctor in the state medical service. This may be one reason for his taking up medicine.

After completing his schooling at various towns, because of transfers of his maternal uncle in the erstwhile Bombay Residency, Dr. Dholakia moved to Mumbai for higher education. He studied at St. Xavier's college, Mumbai (Bombay), passed inter science in 1938, and joined Seth G. S. Medical College Mumbai to pursue medicine. He secured MBBS in 1943 and MS (General Surgery) in 1945; following this he went to England for higher education on a Government of India Foreign Scholarship. He was one of the 3 candidates selected for the fellowship. The final selection involved interview with Viscount Wavell, the then Viceroy of India. Dr. Dholakia obtained M.Ch.

orthopedics from the University of Liverpool and FRCS from the Edinburg, both in the year 1948. He then visited orthopaedic centers in the continent and attended the First International Conference on Poliomyelitis held in New York, before returning to India.

Dr. Dholakia began his career as a polio surgeon at Children's Orthopaedic hospital of "Society for Rehabilitation of Crippled Children". Subsequently, he joined KEM hospital as Hon. orthopaedic surgeon. He was appointed Prof. and Chief of Orthopaedic Surgery in the year 1952. He left KEM hospital in 1972. Dr. Dholakia had joined Bombay Hospital in the year 1956. He remained associated with Bombay Hospital till the end.

Dr. Dholakia was a hard-working individual, a tough task master, a perfectionist (he would often read the operation before coming to surgery), and a strict disciplinarian. He pioneered joint replacement surgery and scoliosis surgery in India. With a single mindedness of purpose he established and raised orthopaedic surgery to great heights. Many of today's leading lights of the speciality were trained by him. He was a good mentor and supported his juniors in their work. One of his students says – "he learnt more from him than from the degrees". Dr. Dholakia was an astute clinician and caring to his patients. His mere presence and touch would make patients and the relations confident that the problem would be resolved. He was

truly a gifted individual.

For his invaluable contributions to the growth and progress in Orthopedics, Dr. Dholakia was decorated with many honours and recognitions. These include Dhanwantari Award (1982), Purkyne Medal of Czech (1988), International Master Surgeons Award of the International College of Surgeons (1994), and Orthopaedic Surgeon of the Millennium Award (Orthopaedic Association of SAARC countries). He delivered prestigious lectures - MacMurray lecture Liverpool; Keynote address WOC Nigeria; Guest oration Beijing; Guest oration Moscow; Dr. Kini, Dr. Borges, Dr. Katrak, Dr. Ginde, and Dr. Mukhopadhyaya Orations. He was President of many associations including Indian Orthopaedic Association (1968), SICOT (1978), and Association of Surgeons of India (1982). He was awarded Padmashri by President V V Giri in 1973.

Dr. Dholakia had a towering personality (literally and figuratively). He had a commanding voice and was an effective speaker. His interests included music, cricket, travel, and photography.

Dr. Dholakia died on 17th June, 2004 after a prolonged illness. He is survived by his 91 year old wife Saroj, a gynaecologist.

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