

## Associate Professor Dr Vijayan Appasamy (1953 – 2015)

It was with much sadness that we learnt of the passing of A/Prof Vijayan Appasamy, or “Prof V” as he was fondly known to all, on 20 March 2015. He was in Chicago, USA, representing Singapore at a surgical educators’ meeting, doing what he liked best, when he suffered a massive heart attack. He leaves behind his wife and 2 daughters.



Vijayan graduated from the University of Madras in 1979 and came over to Singapore in 1982. After finishing his housemanship, he chose to sign on as a regular with the Naval Diving Unit, where he obtained his basic and advanced Diving and Hyperbaric Medicine certificates.

He was responsible for writing naval medicine doctrines and reorganised the Diving Unit and Hyperbaric Medicine Centre. He was also an instructor for the Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) course and the Advanced Medical Officer Course (AMOC) for the Navy, and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel, before making a mid-career switch to general surgery in 1996.

He joined the Department of General Surgery in Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) and obtained his double Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS) in 1998. He chose to specialise in trauma and acute care surgery and was instrumental in setting up the trauma service at TTSH, along with his “partner-in-crime” Dr Chiu Ming Terk. Under his leadership, the service attained international recognition when it was appointed the training centre for the ATLS course.

He was the “doer”, while Ming Terk was the “dreamer”, in their own words.

He then pursued his passion of surgical education, making his mark rapidly in this field. He was a very popular and passionate teacher, who led by example. Those at his memorial service in TTSH will remember the numerous tributes from his students and residents, which moved many to tears. He

moved with them, as one of them, friend and mentor.

A tireless worker and achiever, he wore many hats, including Director for the General Surgery Residency Program at National Healthcare Group; Assistant Head, Education and Training, Department of General Surgery; Adjunct Associate Professor with the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine; Senior Lecturer with Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine; Member, International Residency Review Committee, ACGME-I; Reviewer with the Division of Graduate Medical Education of Yong Loo Lin and NHG schools of medicine, and served as an examiner for the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) and Master of Medicine (MMed) (Surgery) exams, to name just a few. He also served in the executive committee of Joint Committee on Specialist Training (JCST) and later was appointed member of the review committee for residency programmes.

He also found time to serve in the College of Surgeons, Singapore, first in the Chapter of General Surgeons, rising to General Secretary, Vice President and eventually President Elect. He was, in fact, due to take office in May 2015. With his untimely passing, the College has lost a visionary leader.

Many may not know that he was also a volunteer with the Drug Rehabilitation Centre Review Committee of the Ministry of Home Affairs, for which he received 10-year and 15-year Long Service Awards. His list of awards and commendations is lengthy, of which his Public Service Medal (PBM) and Public Service Star (Bintang Bakti Masyarakat) (BBM) deserve special mention, being National Day honours.

But perhaps the greatest of honours is the legacy he leaves behind, in the form of the medical students and residents he helped train, who will bear testament to the inspiring teacher, mentor and friend that he was.

May his soul rest in peace.

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