

Obituary - Professor Sanjeev V Thomas



Professor Sanjeev V Thomas

**His life was gentle, and the elements So mixed in him,
that Nature might stand up And say to all the world,
“THIS WAS A MAN”.**

— William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

The passing of Professor Sanjeev Thomas on February 4, 2024 has cast a pall of gloom that would linger for long. The void is immense and immeasurable because Professor Sanjeev Thomas was not only a colleague, but also a guiding light, a fountain of inspiration, and a friend whose warmth touched countless lives. As we honor his memory, we salute him and all those uncommon virtues that he came to be identified with during his magnificent journey through life.

An outstanding clinician, a distinguished researcher, and a teacher par excellence, Dr. Sanjeev Thomas was an epitome of brilliance in every facet of his professional and personal life. His commitment to patient care was matchless as he brought light into many lives. His encyclopedic knowledge, coupled with commendable compassion, endeared him to patients and colleagues alike. Countless individuals benefited from his professional expertise, mentorship, and unwavering dedication to neurology.

Dr. Sanjeev Thomas obtained his postgraduate degree in medicine from the Government Medical College, Trivandrum, after earning the undergraduate medical degree from TD Medical College, Alleppey. He went on to specialize in neurology and earned a Doctorate of Medicine from the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Trivandrum. During his illustrious career, Dr. Sanjeev picked up an impressive array of fellowships, awards, and distinctions, each a testament to his outstanding contributions to neurology. In 2008, he was honored with the Vimla Virmani Award from the National Academy of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, in

recognition of his work on the psychosocial and economic burden of epilepsy in India. The following year, Dr. Sanjeev received the Indian Council of Medical Research International Visiting Fellowship for a productive stint at the University of Texas, USA. He was conferred the Fellowship of the National Academy of Medical Sciences and the Fellowship of the Indian Academy of Neurology. The Fulbright Visiting Lecturer Fellowship in 2011 marked him as the only neurologist from India to receive the honor, further cementing his reputation as a global leader in his chosen domain. In 2012, he became the Fellow of the American Neurological Association. His appointment by the International League Against Epilepsy in 2012 as a Member of the Task Force to evolve epilepsy treatment guidelines was yet another honor that underscored his contributions to the field of epilepsy management. Notably, Dr. Thomas was one of only three individuals from Asia selected for this, alongside representatives from China and Japan.

Beyond his clinical and academic pursuits, Dr. Sanjeev Thomas was a revered leader and administrator, and his unflinching commitment to excellence permeated every role he undertook. He served as a faculty at the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Trivandrum, for 30 years, during which he also served as the Head of the Department of Neurology. His involvement in the Kerala Registry of Epilepsy and Pregnancy from 1998 significantly augmented research in this specialized area. In 2021, Dr. Sanjeev became the director and professor at the Institute for Communicative and Cognitive Neurosciences.

His tenure as secretary of the Indian Academy of Neurology bore testimony to his capability as an administrator. Particularly noteworthy was his pivotal role as the editor of the Annals of the Indian Academy of Neurology from 2006 to 2011, when he steered the journal through a period of growth. His penchant for effective leadership scaled greater heights when he became president of the Indian Epilepsy Society in 2017 and president of the Indian Academy of Neurology in 2018.

As a researcher, the contributions of Dr. Sanjeev Thomas resonate globally, shaping clinical practice and guidelines. His pioneering contributions to epilepsy research and his visionary approach to patient care are exemplified by the Kerala Registry of Epilepsy and Pregnancy. Established to alleviate the sufferings of women with epilepsy, the registry is one of the largest cohorts globally and is seamlessly integrated with the EURAP International Registry. This collaboration facilitated the analysis of data on the effects of antiepileptic drugs during pregnancy, providing invaluable insights that inform clinical practice.

Dr. Sanjeev Thomas was an enthusiastic mentor and educator, imparting knowledge and expertise to scores of postdoctoral

fellows and neurology residents. His dedication to teaching and mentorship inspired countless students and fellows to strive for excellence in neurology. He was a guiding light for many as they embarked on their professional journey.

What is more, Dr. Sanjeev Thomas stood out by his humility and compassion, earning the admiration and respect of colleagues and peers alike. Despite numerous accolades, he remained approachable and down to earth, always willing to lend a helping hand and share his expertise. His warmth, gentle demeanor, and caring nature endeared him to all those who crossed his path, leaving a lasting impression on one and all. With boundless energy, he effortlessly balanced manifold roles – dutiful son, caring brother, devoted husband, loving father, and grandfather. Adhering to lofty and time-tested principles, he led by example and showed them the value of integrity and resilience in navigating life's challenges. These qualities, deeply ingrained in him, continued to inspire and offer solace to his near and dear ones.

The life of Dr. Sanjeev Thomas exemplifies the profound truth expressed by Albert Camus: "One's life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by demonstrating that there is a meaning in complete self-giving."

As we mourn the loss of our dear mentor, colleague, and friend, we take solace in the knowledge that his legacy will continue to inspire and guide us in the years ahead. He may no longer walk among us, but the fragrance he has left behind would continue to enrich the many lives that he has touched.

In the Annals of the Indian Academy of Neurology, the name of Dr. Sanjeev Thomas would forever remain synonymous with excellence. In honoring Dr. Sanjeev Thomas, a neurologist of impeccable personal and academic credentials, we honor ourselves.

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