

Remembering MK Rajakumar

In the early days when I first started attending conferences as a young doctor, I always enjoyed and admired the charisma and extraordinary captivating oratory skills of Dr MK Rajakumar when he was called to speak or respond to issues. Consistently he would touch on the health of the 'people' the 'community', topics more often than not just a tiny streak filtering through the endless talks on 'patients and hospitals'. But those veins of opinion and argument set out strong impulse and generate power that have brought about changes and transformations in those who came into contact with them.

In 1996, I was assigned to head the Primary Health Care unit in the Ministry of Health and was delighted to work with the Dr Rajakumar and to have the chance to gain from his wisdom. That was also the year we started to create a new medical specialty to serve the public primary care clinic – the Family Medicine Specialist. Dr MK Rajakumar and his contemporaries were instrumental in the conceptualization of this new specialty. The journey was not plain sailing. To start with, medicalisation of health and interest in hospital care was entrenched. There were so many interpretations and possible directions and scope of this new Family Medicine specialty. But, with his passion, unyieldingness and persistence, he kept the Primary Care flag flying, thus ensuring that it gain the necessary attention. Often known for his common sense, neutrality and pragmatism, his devotion to public service led to his call for the public primary health care services to take on the leadership. It was hard work against all odds in making Primary Care earned its rightful presence not only locally but also internationally.

It was gratifying to note that the years of tireless hardwork he put in has resulted in Primary Health Care lifted to the pedestal of importance. A high point was the launch of his life's work, "*Family Medicine, Healthcare and Society*" during the historic 30th anniversary of Primary Health Care during the National PHC Conference in April 2008.

Dr Rajakumar was a born leader, always dependable and possessing an innate ability to achieve great things with leadership that transcended many disciples within Primary Care.

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