

Obituary

Dr. AK Abdulla (1924–2021) – A tribute

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Received: 27 December 2021
Accepted: 27 December 2021
EPub Ahead of Print: 28 February 2022
Published: 09 April 2022

DOI
10.25259/JSSTD_88_2021

Quick Response Code:



Figure 1: Dr. AK Abdulla (1924–2021).

Dr. AK Abdulla [Figure 1], a very senior and widely respected dermatologist from Thrissur, Kerala, passed away on October 6, 2021. Dr. Anchamparuthy Kunjipokkerkutty Abdulla was born on August 1, 1924, at Chendamangalam near North Paravoor in the erstwhile princely state of Kochi, presently in Ernakulam District of Kerala state. He had his schooling at Chendamangalam Government School and Pre-University studies at Maharaja's College, Ernakulam. He got graduated in medicine from Stanley Medical College, Chennai.

His professional career started in 1953 when he joined Tamil Nadu Health Service. He was first posted at Kadaloor. After the formation of Kerala state in 1956, he moved to Kerala State Health Service. He served in various parts of the state including Kumbala, near Kasaragod and Kannur. However, for most part of his service, he worked in the District Hospital, Thrissur, and he chose Thrissur for his permanent residence. In 1962, to address the huge demand for care of skin and venereal diseases, the state government decided to train a few doctors in dermatology. This was almost a decade before postgraduate courses in dermatology were formally started in Kerala. Dr. Abdulla received training under the legendary Prof. (Dr.) BM Ambadi at Government Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram. After receiving the training, he was appointed as a skin specialist in District Hospital, Thrissur, from where he retired as a Civil Surgeon in 1980.

He was a very popular dermatologist for decades in Thrissur. His keen diagnostic acumen, the principle of prescribing only a minimum number of drugs, ability to build instant rapport with the patients, and enviable communication skills endeared him to the patients. He had expertise

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in prescribing the traditionally compounded topical drugs (galenicals), which he used to good effect, at a low cost to the patients. Even decades after his retirement, patients from all parts of the state used to throng his house for treatment. As a dedicated doctor, he continued his medical practice, well into his nineties.

One of his thankful patients remembers him: “He considered patients like a son, a daughter, or a family member. He used to cure their diseases with just one or two medicines, barely costing more than a cup of tea.” Another patient fondly remembers him: “He healed countless patients with 99% love and 1% medicine.” These tributes to him coming from ordinary persons speak volumes about his abilities and character.

A doctor from Kumbala remembers him: “I was a schoolboy in 1957, when Dr. AK Abdulla came to Kumbala, my hometown, as the first doctor in the newly opened Primary Health Center there. He was very young, extremely handsome, and highly energetic. He worked there for a few years serving the poor people, braving severe limitations in facilities, and expecting nothing in return.”

Dr. MM Faizal, a senior dermatologist in Kochi and a grand-nephew of Dr. Abdulla, writes “He was my role model and my inspiration to be a dermatologist. He loved all and was loved by all.”

Dr. Abdulla was a pious and generous person. He has given away in charity a lot of his wealth. He was very active in the social sphere of Thrissur, considered to be the cultural capital of Kerala. He was an ardent sports lover and was the founder president of the Thrissur District Kabaddi Association. He used to be in the organizing committees of various state and national level sports events held at Thrissur.

He served as the state President of the Kerala branch of the Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists, and Leprologists (IADVL Kerala), during 1979–1980. He had held the position of President of Thrissur branch of the Indian Medical Association during 1977–1978 and was one of the founding members of Dermatology Club, Thrissur.

He was married to Late Mrs. Nadeera Beevi, whom he lost in a tragic car accident in Oman, along with their youngest daughter Mrs. Yasmin. He is survived by his other three children: Mr. Mohamed Sageer, Mrs. Haseena, and Dr. Yusuf Siddique. He is also survived by Mrs. Mariyamkutty whom he remarried after the demise of his first wife.

How to cite this article: Asokan N. Dr. AK Abdulla (1924–2021) – A tribute. *J Skin Sex Transm Dis* 2022;4:89-90.