

## Special Article: History of Indian Academy of Pediatrics

P M UDANI

*Reproduced from: Indian Pediatrics 1988; volume 25 (Issue 1, January): pages 5-13.*

It will be interesting, particularly for the younger generation, to know about the history of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics, which held its first National conference in Poona in 1964 after it was formed in that year. Its history is closely linked with development of pediatrics at some of the centers in India, creation of independent children's hospitals and emergence of pioneer and eminent senior pediatric colleagues initially in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Patna, and later in Delhi, Hyderabad and in some of the other cities in the country. Hence it is desirable to tell the history of these pioneers in pediatrics in the country.

In the mid-40's, there were hardly 12-15 pediatricians in the country, about half a dozen in Bombay, 2 in Delhi, 2 in Madras and about 4 or 5 in Calcutta. Pediatrics made its beginning in Bombay in 1928 as the late Dr George Coelho, who is rightly considered as the Father of Pediatrics in our country, became the superintendent of the first independent hospital, BJ Hospital for children in 1928. He was the Head of the Department of Pediatrics upto 1953, when I took over. In 1929, Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital for children was started as a separate independent children's hospital with its own principal medical officer and later the dean of the Institution, Dr SM Merchant retired after being its dean for many years. In 1948, the Department of Pediatrics was started at the Nair Hospital and Topiwala National Medical College with Dr Shantilal Sheth appointed as the head of the department. At around the same time, the Department of Pediatrics was started in Patna with Prof Lala Suraj Nandan Prasad as the Head. It was in the early 50's, that MD in Pediatrics was started in Bombay and Patna. Also, in the early 50's, Dr PN Taneja, the seniormost pediatrician in Delhi, became the first chief of Pediatrics at Irwin hospital and later full time professor of Pediatrics at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi. Dr JN Pohowalla became the Professor and Head of the Department of Pediatrics in Indore. The discipline of pediatrics progressed faster and today most of the well-established medical colleges in India have independent departments of Pediatrics, headed by a pediatrician.

The early history of Association of Pediatricians of India and Indian Pediatric Society mainly revolves round

the history of two senior pediatricians in the country. Dr George Coelho started independent research and services in pediatrics in 1928. The postgraduates for Diploma in Child Health of the College of Physicians and Surgeons or Bombay joined BJ Hospital and Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital for children in 1944 and that of the University of Bombay in 1946. Many of the senior pediatricians of today in the country worked as the BJ Hospital for children, under the leadership of Dr Coelho. However, it is impossible to separate the twin pediatric personalities of Dr George Coelho from the late Dr RV Sanzgiri, who was not only one of the parent pediatricians and a teacher, initially at BJ Hospital and later at Wadia Children's Hospital, but who also helped to establish a large number of pediatricians in the city of Bombay. From about half a dozen pediatricians in the city of Bombay in mid-fourties, now there are nearly 300 pediatricians, who are the members of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics. Total number of members of the IAP in the country is about 4100.

The Association of Pediatricians of India, started in 1950 in Bombay by Dr G Coelho, enlisted only pediatricians as the Ordinary and those interested in pediatrics as Associate members. The Indian Pediatric Society, however, had a number of non-pediatricians as ordinary members.

Another stalwart in pediatrics was late Dr KC Choudhary who founded the first independent pediatric journal namely, *Indian Journal of Pediatrics* which was initially published from Calcutta in 1933 and is now published from new Delhi by Dr IC Verma and his colleagues. Dr KC Choudhary expressed his original ideas on child health and care in India in the journal. Moreover, Dr Choudhary was responsible for creation of a private Institute of Child Health in Calcutta of which he was the first Director. It was inaugurated by the late Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, a matter of pride for the country.

Dr Coelho was also a leader in the field of medical journalism. He edited the Indian Medical Bulletin in the late 30's. Dr Coelho thought that policies regarding teaching, service and research in pediatrics should be

decided by only pediatricians. Dr KC Choudhary on the other hand was of the opinion that all medical personnel including general practitioners, who were interested in pediatrics, should be made ordinary members of Indian Pediatric Society. This is how the Indian Pediatric Society came into existence, under the leadership of Dr KC Choudhary. The Association of Pediatricians of India was registered in the year 1950 with seven founder members.

A separate department of Pediatrics was created in Government General Hospital, Madras in 1946 with Prof ST Achar as the first full time professor. He was later responsible for the creation of a separate Institute of Pediatrics and Children's Hospital in Egmore, Madras and was its first director. It is one of the largest institutions in the country today. Late Dr V Balgopal Raju was the next Director-Professor and developed the institute further. Professor Achar, along with second generation of Pediatricians in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Patna and Indore acted as a cohesive force between the two national pediatric bodies. He was also deeply interested in research.

With the different philosophy of Dr George Coelho of only having pediatricians as members of the Association to decide policies of pediatric research, training and service, and Dr KC Choudhary insisting that even general practitioners be ordinary members of the Indian Pediatric Society, it became difficult for both the stalwarts to agree to form one national pediatric body in the country. Another important difference of opinion was regarding independent separate conference of the pediatricians. Dr Coelho desired to have Annual Conference of Association of Pediatricians of India with those of which he was the founder member, and other internal medicine specialties. He had tremendous influence on these associations, and for some time he was the editor of the Journal of Association of Physicians of India. It was because of his close association with Association of Physicians of India and various other specialties like Association of Cardiologists, Neurologists, Hematology and other internal medical disciplines that he was not keen to have a separate Annual conference of the Association of Pediatricians of India. Though joint conference helped not only to get a wider perspective of medicine in the specialty conferences, but it also influenced the status of pediatrics as a separate discipline, with senior medical professionals of the country, who were the decision makers on medical education. However, Dr KC Choudhary thought that the Pediatricians of India should have a separate independent Annual Conference of their own as in his own words in 1953 in Pune "A banyan tree cannot grow under another banyan

tree." He felt that the separate annual meeting of the Pediatricians will bring independent discipline status to pediatrics.

Considering the differences of ideas and approach of the two senior pediatric pioneers, a joint meeting of the pediatricians of India including members of both the Indian Pediatrics Society as well as Association of Pediatricians of India was held along with the specialists association in 1953 in Pune. However, the joint body of pediatricians of India could not come to any definite conclusion in starting a separate annual pediatric conference of the pediatricians of India. Realizing the strong views of Dr Coelho and Dr Choudhary, the younger generation of pediatricians decided that it was necessary to have a united voice of all pediatricians of the country to have a National Pediatric body. It was sometime in 1959-1960 that Dr Coelho resigned from the chairmanship of Governing Council of Association of Pediatricians of India and in 1960-61, I was elected as the chairman of the Governing Council of Association of Pediatricians of India. *The Indian Journal of Child Health* was ably edited by Dr George Coelho from 1952 to 1959 but with his resignation, Dr Shantilal Sheth and myself became the joint editors of the Indian Journal of Child Health.

From the late 50's, members of both the national bodies were attending the annual conference of Indian Pediatric Society as well as the Annual conference of the Association of Pediatricians of India along with other specialist bodies. It was in 1960 in Jaipur, that during the annual conference of Indian Pediatric Society, a committee of senior pediatricians was formed. This committee included Dr Shantilal Sheth, Dr Harish Chandra, Dr B D Patel and myself as the Chairman of the Government council of the Association of Pediatricians of India. From the Society's side Dr Sisir Bose, Dr Kali Chatterjee, Dr S P Ghosal and other pediatric colleagues were the members of the committee. A decision was taken that we should make attempts to have one national pediatric body so that we can have unified voice at the national level. Moreover, it was considered unfair to have two national pediatric bodies in one country.

It was Dr Harish Chandra who invited the conference of pediatricians of India which included all the pediatricians including those belonging to both the pediatric bodies in 1963 in Hyderabad to discuss and finalize the liquidation of both the old bodies and create a new national body. After tremendous deliberations by the committee, it was agreed that we should give a new name to the national body so that the names of the Indian Pediatric Society or the Association of Pediatricians of

India should have no links with the new national body. The unanimous decision of the committee was conveyed to the pediatricians of India in a General Body Meeting and it was decided to start with the new name of "Indian Academy of Pediatrics" so that the strings of the association or society were not attached to it. It was also decided that the head office of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics would be in Bombay while office of the new journal of the academy *Indian Pediatrics* should be in Calcutta.

As the Chairman of the Governing Council of Association of Pediatricians of India (API), I was appointed as the liquidator of its assets. In 1964, from the assets of the Association of Pediatricians of India the new office of Indian Academy of Pediatrics was purchased on the first floor of Kailas Darshan which is the present office. Also, a sum of Rs. 45000/- which was in the bank of the API was handed over to the Indian Academy of Pediatrics. It may be pointed out that the joint editors of Indian Journal of Child Health, which was the publication of Association of Pediatricians of India, collected nearly Rs. 1,36,000/- in a period of four years from which the premises for the future office of the Academy was purchased.

The first National conference of Indian Academy of Pediatrics was held in Pune in 1964. Dr MV Phadke was the Organizing Secretary, Dr Lala SN Prasad was the first President of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics, Dr Shantilal Sheth was the General Secretary and I was the Treasurer. To respect the pioneer and senior pediatricians of the country, Dr George Coelho, Dr KC Choudhary and Dr ST Achar were invited to give special guest lectures at the Pune Conference. This was the beginning of the first successful independent Annual Conference of Indian Academy of Pediatrics in 1964 in Pune. Later the term annual conference was changed into National Conference of IAP. It was in 1970 that the office of *Indian Pediatrics* was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi.

The pediatricians have grown in strength not only in numbers, but also in qualitative work. The number of delegates at the Annual Conference increased from about 300 in Poone in 1964 to 750 in 1967 in Madras and today the attendance has gone up to 1000 to 1500 pediatricians and is almost like an international meeting.

*Pediatric Surgery:* Dr Arthur Desa, was the first surgeon who started pediatric surgery in India. Being an integral part of service, research and training in pediatrics, pediatric surgeons played an important role and Dr RK Gandhi, the eminent pediatric surgeon was the secretary of the IAP in 1972-73 and its president in 1979. Dr Lata Deshmukh another eminent pediatric surgeon was the

secretary of the IAP for 4 years from 1982 to 1985. Pediatric surgical problems were thus integrated with general pediatrics for the benefit of child health by the devoted involvement of the pediatric surgeons to the Academy. The pediatric surgical problems are being discussed at various national, state and other conferences as well as in workshops, symposia, etc.

It was in 1965 at the 11<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Pediatrics in Tokyo that attempts were made to invite the International Congress to India. I was elected as the provisional President of the International Congress during the IAP's invitation to International Pediatric Association during the 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress of IPA in Vienna in 1971, if the conference was to be held in India in 1974. However, in the meeting of Council of Delegates of IPA in Vienna we lost by 9 votes against Argentina and hence the 14<sup>th</sup> conference of International Pediatric Association was held in Buenos Aires. It was almost unanimously decided at the meeting of Council of Delegates of the IPA in Buenos Aires that the 1977 International Pediatric Congress would be held in New Delhi. Dr NS Tibrewalla was elected as the President of the XV<sup>th</sup> International Congress. It was extremely well organized in New Delhi by Dr OP Ghai as the Secretary General and other devoted colleagues in Delhi and from all over the country. It turned out to be a great success and the Academy had substantial saving from the International Congress. The interest from these funds helped to expand the research activities of the Academy particularly to encourage the young scientists for research.

In the words of Dr PN Wahi, ICMR Director, during the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of IAP in Indore in 1970 "The Indian Academy of Pediatrics was the first national body in the country to stimulate and motivate the young scientists to carry out research in various fields of child health".

It may be mentioned here that the 'Textbook of Pediatrics' with special reference to problems of child health in developing countries which was started in 1978 as a postgraduate textbook has been completed and given for printing. It is expected to be released before the end of 1987 in 2 volumes of the size of Nelson's Textbook of Pediatrics with 1500 pages in each volume. It will be available to the pediatricians not only in our country but for developing and developed countries of the world. This textbook edited by Dr PM Udani is dedicated to the Indian Academy of Pediatrics.

There is no doubt that the Academy is growing in strength and its official journal, *Indian Pediatrics* has been publishing articles from original scientific work

done in the country. The healthy growth of the Academy can be assessed from the fact that apart from 4100 members, there are nearly 30 branches of the Academy covering Union territories, 11 States, 2 regional branches and nearly 15 city branches. By the time this article is published there will be addition of more branches in the country. Since 1964 till today, 24 National Conferences of IAP and many Annual State Conferences have been held all over the country. Various zonal branches – North, South, North-eastern region and Maharashtra region have held a total of 20 conferences in a period of 4 years since 1983 to 1986. There are nearly 12 subcommittees covering various problems like Child Abuse, Monitoring and Research, Liaison, Code of Conduct, Immunization, Pediatric Education, Public Relations and Resource Mobilisation in Sectorial Coordination, Consumer Guidance and Health Care Delivery. Moreover, a scientific advisory committee for the purpose has also been established. The Academy is conducting 4 to 5 national workshops on our priority problems every year. As mentioned earlier, to stimulate the research by the young scientists, various award papers have been invited in the different fields of child health like Dr ST Achar endowment award for the best paper in Pediatrics, Dr James Flett endowment award in Social and Preventive Pediatrics, Dr SS Manchanda Neonatology research award, Dr Balgopal Raju endowment fund award for Child Health and E Merch award for Tropical Pediatrics. The academy has also increased its scientific activities by awarding research fellowship for training and research work in various fields of child health. The Academy publishes a Bulletin, *Academy Today* from its head office in Bombay.

The Academy has already moved to start International Branches with the help and cooperation of large number of pediatricians of Indian origin residing abroad. Already there is increasing participation of our colleagues abroad in various scientific, educational and other activities supported by the IAP, Medical Council of India and other Government recognized bodies. With increasing facilities available in many excellent institutions, particularly supported by provide agencies, these pediatric colleagues will play a great role by their contribution to child health particularly at tertiary care level.

The Academy has a large number of associate members, who are interested in child health and who at present get our journal *Indian Pediatrics*. It will be desirable to involve the associate members in MCH activities at various levels. Their involvement will go a long way to improve their knowledge in pediatrics and expand and upgrade comprehensive services to children at various levels of health care particularly emphasizing their role in child survival.

The Academy which was not even known, recognized or consulted on problems of child health in earlier years, is now not only well respected but the Academy's representation is well received in various committees of the Government. This is a great achievement of the Academy considering its early history. By the time we cross the 20<sup>th</sup> century, our Academy's contribution to child health will be highly significant at the national and international level and the scientific work done on our priority problems will be equal if not better than many developed countries of the world.