

# transplantation india

## THE FIRST 25 YEARS-YEARS OF FAITH, FIGHTS AND FULFILMENT!

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A functioning human mind has been granted the exclusive privilege of thinking in multiple dimensions. This has helped me to travel down the memory lane.

The day I remember is 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1981, the ninth day of Navratri, the most special day of the Hindu calendar especially in Gujarat! This day is worshipped for “Shakti puja” meaning the day to worship the divine in the form of mother with all the power of the universe!

It started as any other day in Ahmedabad. The sun was shining bright, the birds were chirping, the early winter breeze was sweeping across the city and the city was waking up lazily after the late night festivities of Navratri celebrations. I was as usual up in the early morning drinking my first cup of black coffee wondering about the information that I had received the day before, from the office of the Secretary of Health, Government of Gujarat, Mr. Madhusudan Dayal. Mr. Dayal had been transferred to New Delhi and today was his last working day in Gandhinagar Secretariat. I had developed a liking for this man for his positive approach in handling all kinds of problems. With the departure of this man I was going to lose a well-wisher from Gandhinagar. It was the last chance for me to get the government of Gujarat agreed for creation of a kidney institute on this very campus of the Civil hospital, my dream for a long time!

I finished my clinical rounds with my patients by 11 in the morning and drove to the Secretariat in my mustard colored old fiat car to pursue the difficult if not impossible task! I was tossed from one table to the other typically like any Indian government functioning. I think I was possessed that day and had decided not to leave the Secretariat till I “got clearance for my file”. At the end of the day, by 7 o’clock, unlike the functioning habits of a government office, I was blessed by the Goddess Shakti and the government resolution declaring the creation of the Institute of Kidney Diseases and Research Centre was passed! This was the “D DAY” when the present day IKDRC was born!

I took over the charge as the first Director of the IKDRC on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1981, which was the day of Dussehra! I sat on a chair

which had hand rests broken, in front of a desk prominently marked with coffee cup circles left over by the previous users amidst a heapful of dust! I opened my diary and wrote the famous quote of Robert F. Kennedy: “Some men see things as they are, and say why, I dream of things that never were and say why not!” Soaked in the left liberal philosophy of McMaster University, I sat down to create a model institute which would address to the kidney and related problems of the people of my country, irrespective of their geographical bonafides or socio economical status. I have always believed that medical education in any country is a social process which has to be linked up with aims of bringing solution to socio medical problems of its people. Medical education can never be used as an instrument to accumulate inappropriate amount of wealth from the limited financial resources of the people who live on hand to mouth economical status. I must admit that this thinking was grooved in to my mind set by the training at McMaster. I understand that the challenge of our time for a person with the background of the noble profession of Medicine is to take “state of art” modern medical care to the door steps of the people who cannot afford it. I would like to quote here Albert Schweitzer, one of the great physicians of the recent times, who walked on this earth, better equipped emotionally and intellectually than most of the others: “I do not know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know, the only ones among you who will be really happy, will be those who will have sought and found, how to serve.”

Transplantation is now an acceptable modality of treatment for patients with end organ failure. It was since the early part of 19<sup>th</sup> century that medical scientists had started thinking and discussing about the possibility of transplanting kidneys and indeed kidney was the first organ that was successfully transplanted! Two important advances were to be made prior to the modern era of kidney transplantation. Willhem Kolff, my teacher, the father of modern hemodialysis technology was the first to tell the world that kidney failure patients could be kept alive with dialysis. The availability of this technique provided the necessary logistical support for the development of clinical transplantation. On the other end, by the end of 50s’ surgical technique of transplantation was developed by



## EDITORIAL OVERVIEW

Joseph Murray, David Hume and Thomas Starzl in the United States. In 1956 on 23<sup>rd</sup> December a transplantation team headed by John P. Merrill, the Bostonian Brahmin performed the first successful kidney transplantation between identical twin brothers. This ushered in the new era of kidney transplantation. Jean Hamburger from Paris also attempted kidney transplantation unsuccessfully before Merrill. These great nephrologists of their time were the pioneers of kidney transplantation. Meanwhile Sir Peter Medawar while working on the immunobiology of rejection provided mechanisms of rejection of the grafted organs. His work with Brent and Billingham opened the doors of “tolerance”. This clue helped Thomas Starzl, Sir Roy Calne and our group to develop the concept of tolerance. “Ahmedabad Tolerance Induction protocol” was evolved in the last 7 years keeping Zinkernagel’s “MHC restriction” as the central theme.

We were convinced that renal transplantation with tolerance induction was the best choice for end stage failure. Our journey towards tolerance began on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1998. As we went by, our understanding of the subject got better and

we became more comfortable and confident in evolving our protocol. I must admit that our understanding of “tolerance” also matured with our experience. I was fortunate to get whole hearted support and implicit trust of my patients in me and my work that took me this far! Now as it stands today, I will not be wrong to say that I see light at the end of this long tunnel and we are very close to the Ultimate, “Tolerance- complete and robust”! With little luck and blessings from the Almighty we will succeed with our embryonic stem cell and somatic cell nuclear transfer technique to offer complete cure of several autoimmune disorders in addition to transplantation without any medication!

Research is in reality, a journey in the search of truth. This journey begins on the four wheels; namely an unbiased mind, absolute intellectual honesty, capacity to have relentless pursuance and respect for peer view which defers more often than not! The journey itself provides agony and ecstasy both; it is not important what you achieve at the end, but the journey itself should be the means of your liberation- “Nirvaan”!

*“The first generation Nephrologists were one of the impulsive doers who could move readily from machine shop to the animal laboratory to the clinical ward. Their successors must be prepared for meaningful collaboration between engineers, biologists and physicians. They must be cautioned for continuing education throughout their professional life. They must be aware of the constraints of applied research in medical field with triple imperative of scientific integrity, respect for human rights and appreciation of social priorities. Unless we control and discipline ourselves the traditional optimism of science may soon be replaced by the anguish of misused technology”.*

**- Pierre Galletti**