

PASSING OF A PIONEER

**S. (Sinnamohideen) Jamal, M.B., F.R.C.S. (Ed & G), A.B. (Plastic)
(1934-2008)**

The Official Notice:

S. Jamal, (74), retired Professor of Surgery and Head of the Department, Thanjavur Medical College died at his residence here in the early hours of Wednesday, January 23, 2008 (*Fig. 1*).

Son of Sinnamohideen Pillai Ravuthar and Fakir Fatima Beevi, Jamal did his schooling at Rishi Valley School and Madurai Medical College and his post-graduation in United Kingdom between 1962 and 1964 with fellowships from the Royal College of Surgeons and study in Edinburgh and Glasgow. He did his residency in plastic surgery at the State University of New York in Syracuse.

He joined Thanjavur Medical College in 1969 and established the Department of Plastic Surgery in 1984. He invented a new treatment for filariasis called nodo-venous shunt and was recognized by the World Health Organization. He was past President of International Society of Lymphology and Lifetime Achievement Awardee from the Society (*Fig. 2*).

He is survived by his wife and two sons.



From Family and Colleagues:

Dr. S. Jamal, retired Prof. of Plastic Surgery, Thanjavur Medical College Hospital passed away at his residence in the early hours of January 23, 2008. Born on January 1, 1934, to an illustrious family of Kombai [Manickoonda Mahal] Madurai Dt, he graduated from Madurai Medical College with a gold medal in surgery in 1960, passed FRCS in Glasgow and Edinburgh (1964), did his residency in Plastic Surgery in New York, USA, and passed the Board exam of the American College of Plastic Surgeons in 1967.

On his return to India (1967), he started a Plastic Surgery Unit at Thanjavur Medical College Hospital and elevated it to train M.Ch Plastic Surgery. At Thanjavur he not only saw the big temple but also the big legs of the filarial patients and turned his attention to this neglected field. Thus began his research work in Filariasis. He was responsible for the creation of the Filarial Clinical Research Ward with 10 beds at Thanjavur Medical College Hospital. Impressed by his original work in the field of Filariasis, the World Health Organization held its 12th Scientific Working Group meeting on Filariasis at Thanjavur Medical College Hospital (1985). He was

instrumental in bringing together Lymphologists and WHO Filariologists from around the world.

Prof. S. Jamal was one of the pioneers in Lymphology in India and had vast experience in Filarial Lymphedema. He was one of the top surgeons in this field. Interested in the treatment of Filariasis, he had attended to more than 50,000 patients. He developed the nodo-venous shunt operation for the treatment of Filarial Elephantiasis in 1970 and performed thousands of surgical procedures to date with a 90% success rate.

Since 1970, he has presented a variety of papers on surgical management of Filarial Lymphedema in national and international conferences. In 1981, he conducted a double-blind trial on Coumarin for filarial patients with the late Prof. John Casley-Smith, Univ. of Adelaide, Australia; and research on filarial fever with Prof. W.L Olszewski, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland in 1986; in 1989, he collaborated with Prof. M.H. Witte, Department of Surgery, University of Arizona USA in using lymphoscintigraphy in filarial patients. All of these projects were funded by the WHO.

He was an active member of the International Society of Lymphology, President of the Society from 1991-1993, and organizing President of the 17th International Congress of the Society at Chennai in 1999. He started the Lymphology Society of India in 1996 and was its Charter Secretary General.

He was a life-member of the Indian Medical Association, Association of Surgeons of India, and Association of Plastic Surgeons of India.

The International Society of Lymphology honored him by awarding its highest honor "The Lifetime Achievement Award" during the 21st International

Congress of Lymphology in Shanghai, China on September 26, 2007.

Hansa Jamal Thanjavur, India



Prof. Sinnamohideen Jamal, a doyen among lymphologists and plastic surgeons in India, passed away recently in Thanjavur after a brief illness. With his passing, the Indian and global community of plastic surgeons and lymphologists has lost a skilled plastic surgeon, an enterprising lymphologist, a careful researcher and above all, a kind and gentle caregiver.

Prof Jamal had a distinguished academic career. After graduating from the Madurai Medical College he trained in the UK and obtained Fellowships of the Royal Colleges of Glasgow and Edinburgh. He then moved to the State University of New York, USA, for his residency in plastic surgery and was among the first Indians to obtain an AB in plastic surgery. On his return, he chose to work in Thanjavur rather than set up a lucrative practice in one of the big cities of Tamil Nadu. He established the department of plastic surgery at Thanjavur Medical College, where he had a separate ward for patients with lymphedema (also known as the Filarial Ward).

Although Prof. Jamal trained as a plastic surgeon, his heart was in the lymphatics. Single-handedly he brought lymphatic filariasis to the forefront of the world of plastic surgery and also identified it as the ideal model for study by lymphologists. His lifelong dedication to the study of lymphatic filariasis was characterized by his astute clinical observations coupled with innovative explorations into experimental surgery. He introduced nodo-venous shunting as an effective surgical intervention to provide

relief to patients with lymphedema from filariasis and used his plastic surgery skills to shape the deformed limbs.

Patients with filariasis thronged to Thanjavur to his surgical unit confident that Prof. Jamal's surgical skills would cure them. They were not disappointed. Grateful patients remember with joy the incredible shrinking of their legs, almost magical, a few days after surgery at Thanjavur. Several hundreds of his patients will remember with gratitude his uncanny ability to identify a trivial lesion as the cause of their cellulitis or life-threatening sepsis, and his sage advice in preventing future attacks. Many will also remember his attention to detail especially when questioning them about their dental hygiene and his meticulous search for a focus of sepsis. Certainly all of them will remember him as a gentle, careful and caring surgeon for whom care of the patients was supreme and fees were of no consequence.

Dr. Jamal had a remarkable career as medical researcher and brought to the field of lymphatic filariasis his extraordinary understanding of lymphology and his skills in plastic surgery. By bridging the gap between the basic science of lymphology and applied medicine and surgery, he was among the first to show the practical benefits of hygiene on the progression of morbidity in lymphatic filariasis. His longstanding association with international collaborators in Poland, USA, and Australia laid the foundation for lymphatic filariasis research in this country. The highlight of his collaborative efforts was the organization of a WHO sponsored informal consultation on lymphatic filariasis at Thanjavur in 1985. Dr. Jamal by the dint of his personality and his international stature as a plastic surgeon and lymphologist gathered together a motley crowd of clinicians, pathologists, epidemiologists, lymphologists and plastic surgeons to discuss key issues and set the

research agenda for lymphatic filariasis (*Fig. 3*). This was the first event of its kind that brought together on a common platform various researchers working in this area from all over the world and was possibly the first step in setting up the global program for the elimination of lymphatic filariasis.

As a teacher, Dr. Jamal excelled in imparting the skills that he had learned in a manner that was a shining example of an ideal teacher-student relationship. Never commanding, never ordering, never overpowering, he managed to convince his students about his line of thinking and also brought understanding of the basis of their academic and clinical work by providing vivid examples. He nurtured the specialty of lymphology in India and was the founding General Secretary of the Lymphology Society of India and later its president. He was the first Indian to be elected as the President of the International Society of Lymphology (ISL). He was conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award by the ISL in September 2007 at Shanghai in recognition of his distinguished services to the field of lymphology.

Prof. Jamal had the extraordinary ability to bring people together, whether it was a group of researchers, students, faculty or members of industry. The consummate skill with which he organized the International Congress of Lymphology at Chennai in 1999 is a fine example of how an international conference should be organized and what hospitality is all about.

Professor Jamal's departure leaves a void which will be difficult to fill.

**Dr. G. Manokaran. M.S., M.Ch., F.I.C.S.
Past Executive Committee Member,
International Society of Lymphology,
Founding President, Lymphology Society
of India
Chennai, India**



Pro memoriam

S. Jamal was my greatest foreign friend. He showed me that in friendship there is no “foreignness.” We spent together years at our homes and in hospitals.

Unique about S. Jamal was that, although an Indian, he was universal in his understanding of the mechanisms of diseases irrespective whether we were seeing patients in India, Poland, China or South America. Analyzing diseases in a Darwinian fashion and sympathizing with molecular medicine, he became my closest intellectual soul. Jamal is not anymore with us but the color he added to lymphology will always catch our and next generations’ eyes.

Professor W.L. Olszewski
Warsaw, Poland



*The great leader is he who the people say,
“We did it ourselves.” – Lao Tsu*

*The good teacher explains, the superior
demonstrates, the great teacher inspires.*
–William Ward

“Jamal,” as we respectfully and affectionately called him, was the embodiment of this great teacher, great leader, and great physician. He opened the world of filariasis to Dr. Charles Witte and me and many fellow lymphologists, and, in turn, infused his students with a love of lymphology. His was my second family—genetically endowed by Jamal’s and his lovely wife Hansa’s rare combination of wisdom – kindness – dignity genes. Over the past nearly 25 years, we strolled the byways of many continents and activated many synaptic networks together sharing quiet reflection, vigorous debate, last minute planning, and impossible dreams, thinking

“the best is yet to be.”

Marlys H. Witte, MD
Tucson, Arizona