The Great Neurosurgeon and Spinal Surgery

Professor B Ramamurthi was born in the year 1922, January 30th at Sirkazhi, and did his schooling and college at Trichy and later migrated to Madras Medical College for his medical curriculum. He has done the Himalayan task of establishing two exclusive centers for neurosciences: one Madras Institute of Neurology, Government General Hospital, Madras, and second Dr Achanta Lakshmipathi Neurosurgical Centre, Voluntary Health Services (VHS), Adyar, Madras.

In his early years of curriculum, he was posted under Professor NS Narasimhan, who was the Professor of Orthopedics as well as the Professor of Operative Surgery. By his basic hard work and sincerity, he got into the good books of his teachers. While in orthopedics, he has come across many cases of spinal injuries which occupied the beds for longer duration. So, also in neurosurgery at Institute of Neurology, he specialized himself in the surgical management of spinal tumors viz extradural extramedullary and intramedullary tumors. Also, he performed large number of discectomies. He adapted himself to microneurosurgery at a later state. His son Dr Ravi Ramamurthi was instrumental in this venture. Dr Ravi made him buy a Zeiss microscope in the early years in which he trained himself to be a microneurosurgeon. This is where he often mentioned ‘I missed the bus’—he meant that in his early years of specialization as he concentrated on stereotactic procedures and missed microneurosurgery.

Because of his involvement with people, like Professor S Kalyanaraman, V Balasubramanian, Dr Arjun Das, Dr Jaganathan, made a formidable team in making the Institute of Neurology as Mecca of Stereotactic Surgery. Even at VHS, he was hesitant to take up traumatic spinal injuries as he felt that it may not be of much help to the patient. In early nineties, when the instrumentation technology was improved and Dr K Sridhar, who was trained at VHS, suggested to step up the spinal management procedures. Professor BRM wholeheartedly supported the younger neurosurgeon and paved the way for establishing a spinal center of excellence at VHS. Personally, he has come inside the theater to observe the surgical procedures, placement of implant and wholeheartedly congratulated and blessed the younger neurosurgeons in taking up such a challenging procedures. If he is alive today, I am sure he would have appreciated the advancement of navigation in spinal surgeries, minimally invasive procedures, percutaneous placement of screws, and keyhole surgeries for the benefit of patients which lessens the duration of hospitalization. If I am not wrong, I was the only surgeon who had the great opportunity of being trained since 1978 by Professor BRM. He personally trained me in all intricacies of surgical procedures which gave me a great self-confidence to tackle any type of surgical procedures. Today, I am honored for occupying his chair at VHS, Chennai.

I am sure this small note will be of great help to the present and future students of neurosurgery to imbibe their personality, dedication and commitment to patient’s care. His famous mantra to all his students ‘hard work, dedication, commitment and spend time with patients and relatives explaining the treatment modality and take away their fear’.