



THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE
Harvard University

Saumil N. Merchant



We are saddened to inform you of the death of Saumil Nalin Merchant, M.D., the Gudrun Larsen Eliassen and Nels Kristian Eliassen Professor of Otolaryngology at the Harvard Medical School and at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, which occurred on June 27, 2012. Professor Merchant was a world renowned clinical otologist, otopathologist, teacher and scholar.

He was born on September 29, 1960, in Bombay, India. He received his undergraduate degree at the Ramnarain Ruia College in Bombay and his MD degree from the Seth GS Medical College, University of Bombay. He received training in otolaryngology at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Bombay and his Masters of Science in Otolaryngology at the University of Bombay.

We first became acquainted with Saumil during his appointment here as a Research Fellow in Otolaryngology from 1986-1987. We quickly learned what a devoted and accomplished individual Saumil was. While a research fellow, Saumil decided that he would like to repeat his residency training in otolaryngology in the United States and did so at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary/Harvard Medical School program.

We were fortunate to recruit him as a member of the full time faculty in the Department of Otolaryngology at the Infirmary in 1992. He rose quickly on the academic ladder and was appointed as the first Eliassen Professor in the Department of Otolaryngology at the Harvard Medical School in 2007.

In addition to his clinical practice of otology, Dr. Merchant spent most of his time devoted to research and teaching. He served as the Co-Director of the Wallace Middle Ear Research Unit with his colleague and friend, John Rosowski. In this effort over several years, they systematically established the scientific basis for much of the reconstructive surgery that is done in chronic ear disease and stapes surgery.

*In tribute to their dedicated efforts to science and medicine, deceased members of the Harvard Faculty of Medicine (those at the rank of full or emeritus professor) receive a review of their life and contributions with a complete reflection, a **Memorial Minute**.*

His other research passion was the study of the pathology of the human temporal bone. He served as Director of the Otopathology Laboratory at the Infirmary and did much to enhance the methodology by which human temporal bone pathology is studied, including the application of genomic and proteomic analysis. He was highly innovative in developing a computerized database to store, analyze, and retrieve data which includes images that he made available to the scientific community on an international basis. He served as a co-principal investigator on the NIDCD Temporal Bone Hearing and Balance Pathology Resource Registry, and his research has been consistently supported by NIH funding over the years, a clear testament to the high regard in which his research work was held. His outstanding work earned him the Pulitzer prize for the best paper, awarded by the Pulitzer Society in 1999. In 2004, Dr. Merchant was elected as a member of the Collegium Oto-Rhino-Laryngologicum Amicitiae Sacrum as part of the US delegation. He has given numerous named lectureships, including to the Royal Society of Medicine in London, annual memorial lectures at McGill University, the University of Chicago, and the Ben Senturia Lecture at Washington University.

Dr. Merchant was an outstanding teacher at all levels of training, including medical students, residents in otolaryngology, clinical and research fellows, and graduate students. He received the William W. Montgomery Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2000 as presented by the graduating resident class that year.

In his clinical practice he successfully applied the principles of mechanics studied in the laboratory to middle ear reconstruction. Through his temporal bone histopathology studies, he added clarity and seminal information to the pathogenesis, diagnosis, and management of several otologic disorders.

He served as President of the Medical Staff of the Infirmary from 2006-2007. He served as both Secretary/Treasurer and as a member of the Nominating Committee of the International Otopathology Society (Schuknecht Society). He was a member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, Pulitzer Society, American Otological Society, Executive Council of the American Neurotology Society, the Association for Research in Otolaryngology, and the American Laryngological, Rhinological, and Otological Society (Triological Society). Dr. Merchant served on the editorial board of a number of distinguished journals in our specialty. He was the recipient of the Presidential Citation from the American Otologic Society in 2009 and the recipient of the Honor Award from the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery in 2009 for his exceptional service in its scientific programs, exhibits, continuing education and instructional courses. He was a member of the Advisory Council of the National Institutes of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

Dr. Merchant's scholarly contributions included over 140 articles to the peer-reviewed literature, most of which were seminal contributions based on his work on middle ear mechanics and the pathology of the ear. One of his greatest contributions to the literature was as editor of the third edition of Schuknecht's Pathology of the Ear, published in 2010.

On a personal level, Saamil was a loving and giving colleague, physician and friend and a devoted father, husband, and son. He gave willingly of his time and expertise to all. The specialty of otology has lost a wonderful clinician, teacher, and investigator, and many of us have lost a wonderful colleague and good friend. We trust that his writings and teaching will endure, and through the hundreds of residents, students, and colleagues whose lives he has permanently touched, will continue to influence the practice of otology.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. McKenna, M.D., *Chairperson*

Joseph B. Nadol, Jr., M.D.