



A Tribute to Dr. Sandeep Madhwapathy — an Entrepreneur-Built Belgaum Cancer Hospital to KLES Belgaum Cancer Hospital

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Dr Sandeep Madhwapathy



KLE'S Belgaum Cancer Hospital, Belagavi

Dr. M. Sandeep's journey from a bright hardworking student to bright hardworking and empathetic surgical oncologist.

Born on Jan 21, 1958 at Hubli, he was the first born for his parents and grandparents. Since his father was in the army, he and his sister did their early schooling in St Michael's Hubli in the warm and affectionate lap of his grandparents, after which, he joined Kendriya Vidyalaya in Bangalore. He was easily the most noticed student by his teachers and his fellow classmates. He played cricket, table

tennis, and chess and enjoyed his games and achieved quite a success. He was also in dramatics and was sought after for his acting skills. Quite the all-rounder, but surprisingly a bit shy. He completed his junior college in Belgaum at GSS.

All the years growing up, there was no profession he wanted to pursue other than to be a doctor and that too a surgeon. His grandmother passed due to cancer; unavailability of treatment facilities in her hometown made his resolve even stronger.

He did his MBBS from Karnataka Medical College (KMC Hubli) and was on a train to Mumbai the very next day, to work towards his PG in MS. He struggled hard, worked at far-flung hospitals doing locums. He worked with Dr. Choukar of Sion Hospital, and he was Dr. Sandeep's guiding light. Dr. Sandeep's family was in Mumbai at the same time and on an especially bright day announced that he finally got admission for MS at TMH. The rest is history. Every association he made in TMH had a long-lasting impression on his direction. TMH was definitely the wind under his wings, which enabled him to soar in the field of surgical oncology.

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He made a conscious decision of moving to a small town to start his practice after completion of his MS. He worked for a while with other surgeons in their nursing homes, operating and treating cancer patients. There was a certain restlessness about him, as he felt he wanted to reach out to so many patients with cancer. This led him to take the giant leap of setting up his own hospital, the Belgaum Cancer Hospital. However, the journey to establish the center was extremely difficult. Objections were being raised from almost everyone near the vicinity of the proposed cancer hospital. People thought that the waste products of the patients are carcinogenic and objected for passage of drainage pipes in the vicinity of their house and a nearby hospital. Dr. Sandeep had to put in lot of efforts to convince all of them. After overcoming many such hurdles, Belgaum Cancer Hospital was inaugurated on Jan 2, 2004. This hospital had a very well-equipped operation theater, facility for day-care chemotherapy, and cobalt radiotherapy along with brachytherapy. In the entire North Karnataka and Goa, Belgaum Cancer Hospital was the only center with brachytherapy facility. This hospital had the facility to admit 100 patients.

His struggle continued even after establishing the center. He noticed that majority of the patients are diagnosed in advanced/metastatic stage. He accepted this challenge and decided to create awareness among the general population as well as among the doctors practicing in North Karnataka. He visited almost every village in the entire North Karnataka, conducted free cancer detection camps, and delivered lectures to the doctors. The next biggest hurdle was economy associated with cancer treatment. He decided to help people by treating the patients under the Karnataka state government scheme. He was on a continuous growth mode, just never sat on his success, expanding his hospital, and getting the best required equipment. In 2007, he got the latest LINAC machine.

The essence of Dr. Sandeep was his ability to listen, observe, and empathize, all the ingredients for a perfect surgeon. He even did physiotherapy with patients which brought an instant spark in their eyes. His empathy was

repeatedly demonstrated; one such deed was the supply of high-quality food even for attenders for free, yes completely free. He had an ambitious plan to build small chemo centers in villages every 100 km. He had seen the hardship patients and attenders undergo when bringing and travelling back long distances in a nauseous state. He once said that cancer is such a tough disease, I will do my bit to make it slightly easy on the patients and attender.

He walked among us and then suddenly, on September 28, 2013, left a void. He left behind a huge body of work which many mortals will take many lifetimes to do. There are great surgeons, there are great human beings, and then there is a Dr. Sandeep.

After his sudden demise, Mrs. Madhwapathy accepted the challenge and managed the hospital. Later in December 2015, Madhwapathy family and well-wishers of Belgaum Cancer hospital decided to hand over the management to KLE Society. The hospital has now been re-named as KLES Belgaum Cancer Hospital. The KLE Society has added one more operation theater to the existing hospital. The KLE society has equipped the hospital with a much-needed ICU. The number of beds has been increased to 200. The radiotherapy machines have been upgraded with the latest software. KLE Society has continued to treat the patients under the Karnataka state government scheme. It also caters to the patients of South Maharashtra and Goa.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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