

Sohan Singh Hayreh, (1927 – 2022)



Sohan Singh Hayreh, M.D., M.S., Ph.D., D.Sc., F.R.C.S. (1927 – 2022) was born in the small village of Littran in the Punjab region of India. He served in the Indian Army after medical school, following which he joined the anatomy faculty of a new medical college in Patiala. It was here that he began his studies on the optic nerve vasculature. A research grant allowed him to travel to London where he received a Ph.D. under the guidance of Sir Stewart Duke-Elder. After four years at the Moorfields Eye Hospital, Dr. Hayreh became a Senior Lecturer and built his own research program at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Importantly, the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary is where he met his wife, Shelagh. Frederick Blodi recruited Sohan Hayreh to the University of Iowa in 1973, where Dr. Hayreh built a practice centered upon vascular diseases of the eye and performed the majority of his research.

Sohan Hayreh's contributions to ophthalmology are vast, with more than 400 scientific papers and 55 book chapters. He is responsible for much of our current understanding of the blood supply of the optic nerve. He described the pathogenesis of optic disc edema in patients with raised intracranial pressure. Dr. Hayreh divided central retinal vein occlusions into ischemic and non-ischemic forms. He coined the term "anterior ischemic optic neuropathy." He described the importance of systemic hypotension on optic nerve diseases, including normal tension glaucoma. The list of seminal findings could go on and on. Sohan Hayreh received innumerable awards, the most important of which was a Doctor of Science at the University of London presented by Princess Anne.

While he became Emeritus in 1999, Sohan continued to care for patients until the COVID pandemic forced him to stop in 2020. He also continued to write, with four publications in 2021, when he was 93 years-old. Sohan is survived by his wife, Shelagh, his sons Davinder (Davy) and Ravinder (Rob), and three grandchildren.

It was my joy to practice with Sohan for 35 years. We shared many patients and collaborated on research projects. I considered it the utmost honor when he would ask my opinion on an angle or optic nerve. To those of us who knew him well, Sohan was warm, generous, and had a dry sense of humor.

Wallace L.M. Alward, MD, Iowa City, Iowa, USA