

Ravi Thomas
(1953 – 2023)



Ravi was unwell for a couple of weeks and died on Sunday, Nov 12 at age 70, surrounded by his wife, Promila and his adult children, Airez and Aleysa.

Ravi Thomas was born in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh, India in 1953. His parents were both ophthalmologists and he observed his first eye surgery, performed by his mother, at age 8. He trained at the Christian Medical College in Vellore, India and at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi. Ravi undertook glaucoma fellowship training with Jeff Jay at the Tennent Institute of Ophthalmology in Glasgow, and back-to-back fellowships with Frank Billson in strabismus and in glaucoma at Sydney University.

Ravi was my best friend and a really special one. I have known him since 1979 as we did our residency together at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi. After Ravi completed his overseas training, he came back to head the Schell Eye Hospital at his alma mater Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore. By then I was heading the Glaucoma Service at the LV Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad. Ever since his return, we have travelled together extensively, learnt, taught and enjoyed together. Ravi guided my career in more than one way. Insisting that I take a two-week clinical epidemiology course at CMC, Vellore and having me as a house guest during that course is one such instance. I am so-ever grateful to Ravi and to his gracious wife, Promila – a great host.

In his own words in April 2020, during an interview to Queensland Eye Institute, Ravi's career highlights were:

- Being appointed Head of Department of Ophthalmology at the Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India
- Working as Director LV Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad, India
- Being selected as a member of the Glaucoma Research Society
- Being invited to deliver the Fred Hollows oration at a RANZCO meeting in Hobart

- Being invited to deliver the Gillies lecture for the Australia New Zealand Glaucoma Interest group during the World Glaucoma Congress in Melbourne in 2019
- Publishing the first population-based study on the prevalence of glaucoma in South India
- Publishing the first papers on the progression of Primary Angle Closure Suspects and the progression of Primary Angle Closure.

GRS members have seen Ravi's research depth and critical thinking in action. What I would like to share is the impact he had on his students. Here are some quotes from his students.

“A true teacher - who smashed the teacher-student barriers and selflessly taught glaucoma to everyone. His understanding of clinical research methodologies was profound. He ingrained the concept of evidence-based medicine into LVPEI patient care and training philosophies. One of the nicest ever, smartest ever, kindest ever, most empathetic, a sagacious seeker and a tenacious disseminator of knowledge, and with the very best of the gift of gab and teaching skills.”

“A live wire, a teacher par excellence. He taught us not only the finer nuances of glaucoma & epidemiology, but so many life skills as well... all interspersed with a dash of his quick wit, ready repartee and infectious energy.”

“RT changed the way my life has played out. He showed me how there was a different way to look at things. He was abrasive, rude, ego maniacal, and difficult to get along with... but disruptors are often that way, and along the way, we all learnt something valuable. Thank you, for letting the river flow differently for us, Sir”.

“You made a huge difference that transcends your time on this earth. What more could a teacher want. Rest in peace Sir, your job is done.”

I cannot believe that I am even writing this note; it is so very difficult to come to terms with the reality that he is no longer with us. Ravi will continue to live in our cherished memories and through the impact he had on his students, patients and peers through his work.

GC Sekhar, MD
Hyderabad, India
November 13, 2023