



Professor Rajat Gyaneshwar.

Medical mentor Professor Rajat retires from teaching

Well-known and respected medical expert and academic Professor Rajat Gyaneshwar called it a day from active teaching duties from Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Medicine, Nursing, and Health Sciences (CMNHS).

During his term at CMNHS, Dr Rajat served as Professor and Head of the discipline of Obstetrics & Gynaecology and as Acting Dean in 2015 and subsequently as Acting Associate Dean Research for a period.

"I joined FNU because of my passion for medical education but more importantly because of my long term commitment and love affair with the former Fiji School of Medicine, now the College of Medicine Nursing and Health Sciences."

"Since 2011, I saw my role to capacity build at CMHHS so that it would deliver high-quality training for health personnel," he said.

During a virtual retirement ceremony, Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology (O&G), Dr Rajat finally called it a day after almost 43 years of service in the medical fraternity.

Dr William May, CMNHS Dean said Professor Rajat takes a key interest in helping develop staff and students.

"I noted that he strives to emphasise and inculcate the art of caring for people. He is passionate about ensuring that we model compassion and empathy in our daily interactions with patients."

Over the years, CMNHS has observed his wisdom and sound advice to the faculty and students. He has mentored several specialists in Fiji, the region and internationally" said Dr May.

While growing up in Labasa, Professor Rajat had decided that he wanted to become a doctor and fulfilled his dream in 1972 after graduating in medicine from the University of New South Wales, Australia.

"As a child, I decided that I wanted to be a doctor and to work in Labasa. I did become a doctor, graduating from the University of NSW in Sydney. After an internship in Sydney, I returned to Fiji and joined Colonial War Memorial (CWM) Hospital in 1974," he said.

He then decided to serve rural communities and was posted to Lautoka, where he was assigned to the Obstetrics & Gynecology department and found the experience so rewarding that he chose to specialise in the field.

The hunger to specialise in Obstetrics & Gynecology had him resign from the Civil Service and undertake postgraduate training in Sydney. After completing his specialisation, he spent two years in the United Kingdom before returning to Fiji in 1981 to take up a position as a clinical tutor in Obstetrics & Gynecology and work as a specialist at the CWM Hospital.

Professor Rajat said that his interest in medical education developed after a six-week fellowship at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in the United States.

"This embarked me on a serious career in medical education. I became more involved in curriculum design and strategies to facilitate learning. At this time the World Health Organisation (WHO) Centre for Medical Education based at the University of NSW ran annual workshops for all teachers at the medical school. The previous Diploma in Medicine & Surgery program was upgraded to a University

Bachelor's programme with Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) being awarded in 1987," he adds.

Professor Rajat left Fiji in early 1988 to work as a Senior Lecturer at an Auckland based university and served as a Director of Obstetrics & Gynecology at Middlemore Hospital.

"In 1989, I was persuaded to return to Sydney to my old training institution. After a year of private practice, I was appointed as a Senior Staff Specialist at Liverpool Hospital in Southwest Sydney. I remained there until my retirement in 2010. While in Southwest Sydney, I was appointed the area Director of Women's Health for 15 years. I was also appointed conjoint Associate Professor at both the University of NSW and the University of Western Sydney," he said.

He took early retirement and returned to Fiji to establish a charitable health Centre in Viseisei, Lautoka. In 2011 he was invited by the then Dean of CMNHS at FNU to join the academic staff.

Professor Rajat's passion during his working career has been to contribute to the improvement of Women's Health, especially in developing countries.

"This passion has taken me on consultancies for various organisations, including the World Health Organisation to almost all the countries in the Pacific, to Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Mongolia, China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Philippines, PNG. Training of health personnel is essential to improving health services. Thus my clinical interests fitted in nicely with my interest in medical education," he explained.

The greatest reward in Professor Rajat's career has been to witness the development and success of many junior colleagues who have become leaders in health as politicians, administrators, clinicians, and educators.

"It has been a great privilege to have had the opportunity to have been associated with them during their formative years. I retire with a sense of gratitude, contentment, and happiness," he said.

Professor of Paediatrics and colleague, Dr Alok Dubey said that Professor Rajat would be missed immensely. Still, his advice and directives will continually guide them in their professional journeys.

"Professor Rajat will allow all of us to get benefit from his wisdom even though he will not be formally coming to the office. I don't think Prof Rajat is proceeding on retirement, he is simply changing gear of his life to proceed in the phase of re-flourishment," said Dr Dubey.

Professor Rajat in retirement will continue to assist his colleagues; however, his primary project is to reflect on his life and to write about the many facets one goes through in one's professional, social, and family life.



Professor Rajat (Middle) with staff from MacGregor House, Lautoka.