

## **MEMORIAL TRIBUTE: DR JARNAIL SINGH KHOSA**

Singapore has lost a great pioneer and shining beacon of Aviation Medicine on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2021.

Jarnail was Singapore's top Indian A levels student in his year and was awarded an Indian Government scholarship to do the course of his choice. Jarnail chose to read medicine at the Government Medical College, Patiala (Punjabi University) India. It was at this medical college where he met his wife to be.

Upon graduation, Jarnail returned home to serve his National Service in 1978. In the Singapore Armed Forces Medical Officers Cadet Course, he first encountered the new field of Aviation Medicine.

Newly commissioned as a Medical Officer with the rank of Captain (Dr), he promptly signed on with the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) to specialize in Aviation Medicine. He joined as RSAF's 3<sup>rd</sup> career Aviation Medical Officer and attended the No.16<sup>th</sup> Diploma in Aviation Medicine Course at the RAF Institute of Aviation Medicine, Farnborough in 1983.

Jarnail came back to the newly formed Aeromedical Centre, then co-located with the Paya Lebar Airbase Medical Centre. He was a pioneer in establishing the RSAF Aeromedical Centre and served as Head of Aviation Physiology Training of aircrew where he formulated and refined the training syllabus and content. Over the next few years his mentoring skills were evident, with the 4 new young aspiring aviation medicine hopefuls.

One key project he led was the establishment of the first G-training program for the first batch of RSAF F-16 pilots. He attended the initial training with the aircrew at USAF SAM at Brooks AFB. Despite suffering from a touch of 'flu' and jet lag, Jarnail persisted with the G-training so as not to waste his trip. He grandly G-Loc-ed, much to the amusement of the pioneering F16 pilots. In fact, his sporting spirit won over many of these hard-nosed pilots and for many generations of training, his G-LOC video was used as demonstration of what can happen to aviators who pull G when under the weather.

In 1989, Jarnail succeeded in getting RSAF's approval to purchase a High-Performance Human Centrifuge which was to be the first in this part of the world. The side effect of this was a new Aeromedical Centre building to house the centrifuge and which also houses the Chief Airforce Medical Officer's Office. This was completed in 1994.

In 1993, Jarnail was called to yet do another 'National Service'. He was seconded from the RSAF to the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS), to be the

first full time Aviation Medicine trained physician of the Civil Aviation Medical Board (CAMB) as the Deputy Chairman. He took over in 1997 as the Chairman of CAMB. Since then, with Jarnail's foresight and care for the development of civil aviation medicine in Singapore, he made tremendous contributions to establish CAAS' thought-leadership role in civil aviation medicine internationally.

The world's first Ultra Long Range (ULR) flight that was launched by Singapore Airlines in June 2004 captured international attention. In the preceding 3 years, CAAS had convened the ULR Task Force to bring together expertise to study and validate the alertness of flight crew on the ULR flights. Jarnail chaired and led this group. The findings of the studies were shared internationally, and they formed the foundation for the development of Fatigue Risk Management System (FRMS) regulations and guidance material.

Jarnail became a prominent member of the ICAO Fatigue Risk Management Task Force and championed the application of FRMS in Singapore and around the world. His towering role in international civil aviation medicine was also exhibited through his instrumental part in initiating and coordinating the ICAO-led "anti-SARS" Programme in 2003.

Jarnail was the chair of the ICAO Medical Provisions Study Group (MPSG) since its inception in 2004.

Subsequently, he helped ICAO spearhead the development and institutionalization of the Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA) Programme, in order to continue efforts in promoting pandemic preparedness in international civil aviation after SARS was defeated.

Jarnail was tireless in driving the CAPSCA programme across the world. He was appointed by ICAO as the CAPSCA Global Technical Advisor since 2006 till his untimely passing.

In 2014, in the light of the Ebola public health emergency, the UN Multi Partner trust fund awarded a grant to a joint ICAO (CAPSCA) / World Health Organization (WHO), Ebola Aviation Action Plan project to implement emergency preparedness plans and containment measures. Jarnail was the Chief Technical Advisor to the project.

Jarnail was bestowed the Won Chuel Kay Award at the 81st Annual Scientific Meeting held in Anchorage, Alaska, in 2011 for his outstanding contributions to

international aerospace medicine. He was awarded the Singapore Public Administration Medal (Silver) in 2015 by the President.

Jarnail was an Academician of the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine (IAASM) and became the first Asian to be its President (2015-2017). He was a Director of IAASM from 2005-2009 and Nominating Chair from 2017-2019. Jarnail was also Vice President (International Services) in the Aerospace Medical Association from 2010-2011.

Closer to home, he was a founding member, and the first President of the Society of Aviation Medicine, Singapore. He was also the first Chairman of the Sub-specialty Training Committee for Aviation Medicine, under the Joint Committee for Specialist Training of the Singapore Medical Council. In 2012, Jarnail was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Airline Pilots Association of Singapore in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the pilot profession and aviation community in Singapore.

Jarnail was a loving husband, a caring dad and a doting grandfather. He always had time to listen, no matter how obviously busy he was. He was always considerate and kind. Such is the person we know as Jarnail.

Air forces usually have callsigns tagged to each member and were usually given as a reference to some ‘memorable’ event or quirk. In Jarnail’s case, we remembered having a challenging time looking for such anecdotes – until someone said - “He is such a nice guy!”

“Nice Guy” indeed is Jarnail’s call sign. The Singapore Aviation Medicine community has indeed lost a shining beacon and mentor.

We have lost a good friend. It always hurts when a good friend passes on.

But we shall always cherish his exemplary leadership, wisdom and passion. We shall remember his tremendous contributions and we in Singapore, need to take up the baton to continue his vision for aviation medicine.

We will miss you Nice Guy.

From:

The Society of Aviation Medicine and Psychology Singapore and the Singaporean Aviation Medical Community.