

## Obituary

# Chirayath M Suchindran

Kaushalendra K Singh

Professor Chirayath M Suchindran (Suchi) died on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2023 after a long and illustrious academic career spanning over almost 50 years. Born on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1942 in Kochi, India, Professor Suchindran had his graduation at the University of Kerala in Trivandrum. Subsequently, he went to the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA in 1967 to pursue doctoral studies on a Ford Foundation scholarship under the mentorship of Professor Mindel C Sheps and, after completing his doctoral studies in 1972, he joined as a faculty at the Department of Biostatistics, of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill where he remained very active in teaching and research in demography and statistics for more than four decades. He also served on many professional bodies including Biometrics Society, Population Association of America (PAA), and International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP). He was also an elected fellow of the American Statistical Association and the Indian Society for Medical Statistics. At the time of his death, Professor Suchindran was a member of the Editorial Board of the Indian Journal of Population and Development. He also served as the Deputy Editor of Demography, Co-editor, Associate Editor and Advisory Board Member of Mathematical Population Studies, Associate Editor, Survey Methodology, and Member of the Editorial Board of Canadian Studies in Population, Demography India, etc. The research acumen of Professor Suchindran is reflected in his book on life table techniques and applications which he authored with Professor NK Namboodiri and more than 250 research papers that he got published in scientific journals of international repute. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Professor Suchindran taught several courses including a course on demographic techniques in association with Professor Richard Bilsborrow and maintained a National Institute of Health-funded training grant for 25 years. He was the most passionate about guiding students to pursue their academic dreams. He also served as the Director of Graduate Admissions in the Department of Biostatistics of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for many years.

I first met Professor Suchindran in 1990 when I joined the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to pursue my post-doctoral research on a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation. At the very first meeting, I was overwhelmed by the generosity and the humbleness of Professor Suchindran. I reached Chapel Hill along with my wife and two kids with only 20 Dollars in my pocket, of which I had spent 16 Dollars at the John F Kennedy Airport, New York before reaching Chapel Hill. Professor Suchindran

was already at the airport to receive me and my family and, without any formality, he put 200 Dollars in my pocket and left me at a hotel which he booked for me in advance and asked me to rest with my family because we all were very tired from a long journey. Next morning, he took all the pains to come and helped me to find an accommodation for the stay and paid all expenses by himself.

During my stay of two years at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I had regular interaction with Professor Suchindran and have many memories of him. He usually sat at the Department of Biostatistics of the School of Public Health of the University, and I had my office at the Carolina Population Center (CPC), but it was never an obstacle in our lively discussions and interactions. He used to call me frequently after lunch and we had discussions on many concepts and thoughts about the subject. He used to explain each concept on a small board that was placed in his room. He always offered me tea during these discussions but he himself took only hot water.

Professor Suchindran motivated me to venture into the new world of data analysis as I was doing pure Statistics manually and happened to be a core mathematical demographer. The motivation of Professor Suchindran encouraged me to start practising data analysis using hazard and logistic models and, in the process, I learnt SAS, LIMDEP and other related statistical software packages. He was my mentor in this new field of academia as I had spent a decade in teaching and research in Statistics and Mathematical Demography. Professor Suchindran gave me ideas about how to interpret the data and to present results of data analysis. I was very much impressed with the knowledge and intelligence of Professor Suchindran over a range of academic disciplines including biostatistics, demography, and data analysis. Professor Suchindran was also instrumental in motivating and training me to give Friday seminar at the Carolina Population Centre having audiences from different academic disciplines. The Friday seminar was a mandatory requirement for all post-doctoral fellows. I found in Professor Suchindran true academician, demographer, and statistician. His teachings have helped me in pursuing my research interests throughout my academic career.

I last met Professor Suchindran in October 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic when he visited Varanasi after retirement to pay homage to Lord Shiva. He also delivered a lecture at that time to the faculty and students of the Department of Statistics of Banaras Hindu University and interacted with the faculty and students of the Department of Statistics and gave very valuable inputs to the research scholars in pursuing their research.

The death of Professor Suchindran is an irreparable loss to the academic community the world over. I am sure, his teaching and his research will continue to guide the academic fraternity in the coming years.