

Eminent HIV researcher Dr Suniti Solomon passes away at 76

29 July 2015 | News

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The medical fraternity, scientists and biologists are mourning over the sad demise of India's most respectable HIV researcher and the President of the AIDS Society of India, Dr. Suniti Solomon. Dr. Solomon, who was ailing from liver cancer, passed away at her residence in Chennai on Tuesday.

She was 76 years old and was the first to bring to the world the prevalence of HIV infection in India in 1986. She was also the first one to successfully lead the research into the treatment of HIV infected individuals.

"Her death was sudden, she passed away this morning. She was getting treatment for liver cancer for the past two months," Ganesh and Krishnan of Y R Gaitonde Center for AIDS Research and Education (YRG Care) told media.

Dr. Suniti Solomon earned an M.D in Microbiology from Madras University. She was trained in pathology in the United Kingdom and the United States. She was the Founder-Director of the Y.R. Gaitonde Center for AIDS Research and Education (YRG CARE), a premier HIV/AIDS care and support centre in Chennai. She and her colleagues documented the first evidence of the HIV infection in India in 1986. When she served the Madras Medical College and Government General Hospital as a Professor of Microbiology, she set up the first voluntary testing and counseling centre and an AIDS Research Group in Chennai.

Dr. Solomon was a member of the National Technical Team on women and AIDS, a member of the advisory board of

International AIDS Vaccine Initiative-India, member of the Scientific Committee of the National AIDS Research Institute, Pune, Government of India, a permanent member on the Microbicides Committee of the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), and was a member on the board of AVAHAN, the India HIV/AIDS Initiative of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Trustee At-Large of the International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care; and member of the Asia Data Safety Monitoring Board of the Division of AIDS, NIH, USA.

Dr. Solomon was also the Indian Principal Investigator of several pioneering HIV research studies: the US National Institute of Mental Health's multi-country HIV/STD Prevention Trial; the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' HIV Prevention Trial Networks; NIH award that will measure stigma in health care settings in Southern India; and a Phase III study of 6% CS GEL, a candidate microbicide of CONRAD. She was the Director of the Southern India program of the Brown-Tufts Fogarty AIDS Training and Research Project.