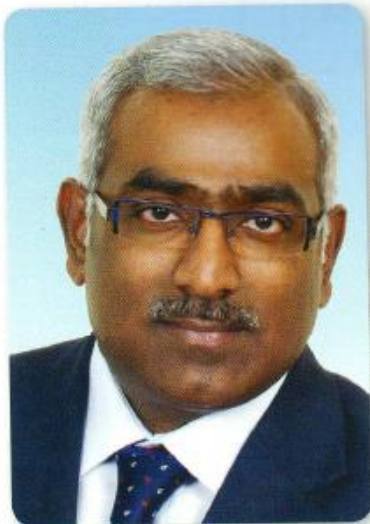


UNITING CONTINENTS IN FIGHTING CANCER

Editors Note:

This year Aaratrika got introduced to Dr. Somasundaram Subramanian, MD, Surgical Oncologist and Founder Director, Eurasian Federation of Oncology (EAFO) in Moscow. A cancer specialist focusing more on head & neck and skin cancers he has organized over 150 educational, scientific and social projects for cancer specialists, pathologists, surgeons, policy makers, journalists and non-oncologists in six countries of the Eurasian continent, provides fellowships and stipends for training young professionals from economies in transition. He is Laureate of Medal of Russian Academy of Medical Sciences, has published over 110 papers and is a Member of Editorial/Advisory Boards of five International Oncology, ORL and Ecology Journals, Investigator in more than 10 Clinical Trials, has served as Member of Expert Council on Tobacco Control in the Russian State Duma (Lower House of Russian Parliament).



Dr. Soma, as he is fondly called, is a cancer survivor himself. He says he was gifted with cancer because having recovered from it helps him easily interact with those experiencing the same. He says his profession is his worship and he is happiest shaping and guiding young professionals.

Here are excerpts from his interview, about interesting events from his childhood. The complete interview will be published in our website.

You have an exhaustive list of academic, professional, editorial and sports achievements. How did it all begin?

I grew up in the city of Madurai. During school days I had my own schedule which was very different from that of my classmates. My school was situated in the southern end of the city and my house was in the northern end, around 10 kms away. I was the district champion in cycling and could reach home from school within 14 mins, which would be by 3:59pm. I had a reason to rush. From 4:00 to 5:00pm sharp, my favourite UGC programme would be aired on TV. I would watch it with full concentration and would allow nobody to disturb me during that time. I have never missed a single episode of that programme. After a cup of milk, I would play till 6:00pm. After that I would go to sleep until 9:00pm which was the earliest time my father would return home from work. We would have dinner together watching news on TV. After that, my father who was a doctor (pathologist) and a professor at the Madurai Medical College would work with his microscope, I would mostly watch TV with him till 10:30-11:00pm, which was when my parents would go to sleep. I had a separate room for myself at home. After 11:00pm or even closer to midnight, I would begin my studies and do my homework till 3:00-4:00am, only after which I would go to sleep. My mother did not agree to my unusual schedule and we often argued but I stuck to my own self-designed timetable.

UICC World Cancer Leaders' Summit, Cape Town, South Africa
with Eduardo Cazap - UICC Ex President, Terez Kutluk - UICC President Elect, Luiz Antonio Santini - Director - National Cancer Institute - Brazil and Gary Cohen - IBM Chairman - Africa.



Who had a strong influence in shaping your personality?

Four persons in particular influenced me strongly in my childhood.

My mother, who was very strict and quite harsh.

My maternal grandfather was a fascinating person with whom I had a great bonding and he imbibed in me the basic values of life. I often had differences of opinion with my mother and I found solace in complaining to him. I knew he was always there for me.

I was a voracious reader and my father encouraged me to read, never refused to buy me any books. I recollect one incident when I asked for a book which was very expensive as it was an imported book. His salary was around Rs 2500 then. The cost of the book was about Rs 1000 at the book exhibition in our city. Even without thinking for a moment, he bought the book immediately. I still remember the name of the book, a colourful 600 plus page American book called "Biology: The World of Life". My father was a very hard worker, great doctor, teacher and philosopher for me and thousands of others.

I always questioned a lot. I learnt to ask why, for what and how to everything I did. This was Socrates influence. I was so fascinated by Socrates that I could act the 60 minutes mono act play on Socrates and other roles on one go, that actor Shivaji Ganeshan had played in Tamil language.

You were undoubtedly a very bright student, any particular accomplishment that you would like to share with us?

In 1986 I won the Junior Scientist Award and Medal in Science Talent Exhibition for models on AIDS, which was called 'A Devastating New Problem, 3-D model of HTLV III: Human T-Cell Lymphotropic Virus III/LAV: Lymphadenopathy Virus (now called as HIV)'. Then with the same I had won in the State Level Science Exhibition.

I had created a three dimensional structure of the AIDS causing virus using a football and parts of plastic toy necklaces. Then I made an animated working model by assembling a PCB (printed circuit board) with LED (light emitting diodes) to show how AIDS causing virus attacks the human immune system - the T cells, how it multiplies, the five to six stages in which it develops, how from one they become many virus and how the virus spreads in human body.



Left (for us) to right in the front row:
Ashok SHAHA (USA), Jatin SHAH (USA), Soma SUBRAMANIAN (Russia), Arif JAMSHED (Pakistan), Pankaj CHATURVEDI (India)
The World Congress on Oral Oncology, Sao Paulo, Brazil, July 2015