



### **Dr. M.K. Rajakumar (1932–2008)**

Dr Naomi P Harris

November 25 2008 marked the passing of Dr MK Rajakumar, a true medical visionary. Dr Rajakumar, or 'Raj', as he was affectionately known, worked tirelessly for the betterment and development of general practice in his homeland of Malaysia, and throughout the world.

According to Professor Chris van Weel, Raj was not only a 'founding father of our discipline', but also 'one of the icons of international family medicine'. President of the Academy of Family Physicians of Malaysia (AFPM) for a number of years, Raj was also president of Wonca from 1986–1989. The RACGP and AFPM conjoint Fellowship was one of many dreams Raj realised during his hard work with the two colleges. Raj's work will now live on in the The

Rajakumar Movement, otherwise known as the Wonca Asia Pacific Working Party for Young and Future Family Doctors, which was named in his honour. The Rajakumar Movement hopes to foster mentoring between current and future leaders in family medicine and to promote continuity of representation by young family medicine leaders in the Asia Pacific Region.

I first met Raj in 1999 at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wonca World Rural Health Conference. He was the first person I met when I stepped off the plane, and only now do I realise how privileged I was to spend time with him. Raj made a special effort to talk with me regularly during the conference as I was one of five Australian medical students. He said told me we were the region's future family doctors. I spoke at the conference about Australian efforts to encourage medical graduates to settle in rural areas. Raj, to my surprise, was there in the audience.

He has been in my memory ever since. Last year, when I was furiously searching for a name for what is now The Rajakumar Movement, his name was suggested to me by a colleague in Hong Kong. Instantly, my memories of this humble, knowledgeable man came flooding back. I wrote to him, asking for permission to use his name, and was delighted when he said yes.

I was planning on visiting Raj this September on my way to Wonca Europe. Sadly, however, before I could get there, he lost his battle with a short but serious illness. When I heard the news I was in hospital myself. This may have been the passing of a man I had known for 4 days 10 years ago, and we had shared all of one email since, but I was truly saddened, and moved to tears.

I have been in close contact with Raj's family since then, and visited them in Kuala Lumpur recently. They are a tremendous family and I truly value the support they have given me in my endeavours to ensure the success of The Rajakumar Movement.

Raj touched the lives of every person that he met – his family, his friends, his colleagues and his patients. He is the type of person and family physician that I aspire to be. Raj is proudly survived by his devoted wife, three children and their partners, and his gorgeous grand daughter.