



PROF. SHYAM SUNDAR



Prof. Shyam Sundar is a distinguished Professor (Hon) of Medicine at the Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi. He is an internationally acclaimed clinician-scientist in infectious diseases, particularly visceral leishmaniasis (kala-azar). Over four decades, he has seamlessly combined patient care, teaching, translational research and has established BHU as a globally recognized centre for research on kala-azar, a neglected tropical disease.

2. Born on 30th November 1953, Prof. Sundar obtained MBBS and MD (Medicine) degrees from BHU and subsequently joined the faculty at the Department of Medicine, and remains a BHU faculty. He was born and brought up in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, the heartland of kala-azar, and witnessed the plight of kala-azar patients. He set up a charity field unit - the Kala-azar Medical Research Centre (KAMRC) - in Muzaffarpur in 1993. This charity provides free diagnosis, treatment, food, and travel expenses to this underserved population. KAMRC has now become a model for clinical research, with high impact on the national policies in the diagnosis and treatment of kala-azar globally. He has mentored generations of physicians and researchers who now serve in leading academic institutions in India and abroad.

3. Prof. Sundar played a key role in the clinical evaluation and global adoption of the rK39 rapid (10-minute) diagnostic test with a drop of finger-prick blood, enabling early and inexpensive diagnosis in remote areas. He led landmark clinical trials that established miltefosine as the first effective oral drug for leishmaniasis. The ease of diagnosis and oral treatment were the major factors in the launch of the Kala-azar Elimination Program (KAEP), jointly launched in 2005 in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

4. To find a shorter treatment devoid of Prevailing long and toxic therapy, Prof. Sundar demonstrated the excellent efficacy of one-dose liposomal amphotericin B (AmBisome). This landmark study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) in 2010, demonstrated that a single 10mg/kg dose of AmBisome was safer and more effective than the prevailing one-month treatment. WHO recommended this as a first-line treatment. Thus, there was a paradigm shift in the diagnosis and treatment of KA. Subsequently, the US Manufacturer announced free donation of AmBisome to the three countries participating in KAEP, and other high-endemic African countries. Adoption of this single-dose AmBisome treatment helped India, Nepal and Bangladesh to achieve the target of KAEP between year 2023-24.

5. Prof. Sundar is ranked at the top in the world in the field of leishmaniasis and Kala-azar from the year 2013 to date. Over the span of his career, he has published extensively in academic journals, including NEJM, The Lancet, etc. He has the unique distinction of being the only Indian publishing chapters in the World's most renowned medicine textbooks, Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine and Davidson's Principles and Practice of Medicine.

6. Prof. Sundar has been a recipient of several prestigious accolades. He has been the President of the Association of Physicians of India in 2022, and that of the Clinical Infectious Diseases Society of India in 2015-17. He is an elected Fellow of all three National Science Academies of India. He was honoured as Distinguished International Fellow-2017 and Clara Southmayd Ludlow Medal-2025 by the American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene. The President of India honoured him with the Visitors' Award-2016. He received ICMR's Ambedkar Award, Kamla Memon Award, and PN Raju Award. Ranbaxy Research Foundation Award 2002, and Anne Maurer Cecchini Foundation Award 2010, Switzerland.