

2009 Landmark Award: Saroj Saigal

Dr. Saroj Saigal obtained her medical degree and pediatric training in India. She received further postgraduate training as a resident in neonatology at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland; as an MRC research fellow in neonatology for two years at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec; and an additional research year at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario.



Saroj Saigal

She subsequently joined the pediatric faculty at McMaster University, Division of Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine, as a neonatologist in the newly opened tertiary care center. At the same time she started the Neonatal Follow-up Program for high-risk infants, one of few such programs in the country at the time. This activity subsequently blossomed into a major research interest. Currently she is Professor Emerita at McMaster where she continues to run the follow-up clinic and participate in ongoing research.

Dr. Saigal's scholarly endeavors include the publication of over 125 peer-reviewed articles and 150 abstracts. She has collaborated with national and international investigators and participated in clinical trials in neonatology and perinatal medicine, and lectured throughout Canada, the US and the world. She has been the recipient of major grants from agencies such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and the US National Institutes of Health, and has served as a consultant to both institutes. In 2000 she received a 5-year Senior Investigator Career Award from the Canadian Institute of Health Research that allowed her to pursue her research interests on outcomes of high-risk infants.

Dr. Saigal has served as both President and Secretary/Treasurer of the Section of Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine of the Canadian Pediatric Society; she was a member of the Institute of Medicine's Committee on 'Understanding Premature Birth and Assessing Healthy Outcomes'; and she participated in the US Surgeon General's Conference on the Prevention of Preterm Birth in 2008. In 2005 she received the Canadian Pediatric Society's prestigious Distinguished Neonatologist Award, the Society's highest award for neonatology.

Dr. Saigal is internationally recognized for her truly remarkable studies focusing on the consequences of having been born extremely premature. Her research is unique because it is not only longitudinal in nature, spanning infancy to adulthood, but it also underscores the importance of a regional cohort. She has probed beyond the usual questions related to neurodevelopmental outcomes, and

she has explored the impact of extreme prematurity on the medical, physical, behavioral, psychosocial, family and societal issues. She is one of the pioneers in Quality of Life research from the perspective of the premature children, their parents and health professionals, and has reported on the discrepancy in valuation of 'quality of life' between the consumers and the providers. She has published in journals encompassing a wide range of disciplines, such as pediatrics, psychology, neurology, neurophysiology, sociology, physical medicine, sports medicine, ophthalmology and nursing. Due primarily to her tireless efforts, there is an increased awareness in society that surviving extremely premature infants are at risk for more than neurodevelopmental impairment and that the spectrum of potential problems is broad.

Dr. Saigal's unfailing commitment to defining the consequences of extreme prematurity has fostered a wide variety of research endeavors that are focused on improving the outcome of these vulnerable newborn infants. In addition, through her mentoring of individuals from throughout the world and in various professions, she has assured that future outcomes research will continue to address all aspects that potentially relate to preterm birth.

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