



## In Memorial - Professor Dr. Somchart Lochaya



Professor Dr. Somchart Lochaya, M.D., FACC, FRCP (C) can be best described as a good person who dedicated himself to creating benefits and happiness for his beloved family, friends, patients and homeland. He was a positive role model for many medical staff because he was successful in his work and also enjoyed a rich domestic life: sadly, many successful doctors rarely achieve both well being in family life and career triumphs.

He was born on 25<sup>th</sup> December, 1934 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. His surname was bestowed upon the family by His Majesty King Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yuhua (King Rama VI). "Lochaya" was a combination of his grandfather's name "Loch" and his grandmother's name

"Aya". His father, Phra Chuang Kashetra Silprakan (Mr. Chuang Lochaya), was known as "*The Father of Maejo Agriculture*" at the Maejo University in Chiang Mai. His mother was Khunying Sam-ang Chuang Kashetra Silprakan.

Prof. Dr. Somchart Lochaya began to study medicine at Siriraj Medical School in 1955 and graduated in 1959. During this period, his father had been appointed as Cultural Ambassador and was working in the Office of Educational Affairs at the Royal Thai Embassy in Washington D.C. For this reason, Prof. Dr. Somchart decided to do his internship and medical residency at the Providence Hospital in Washington. In 1961, he moved to the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital, Boston continuing his residency for another 2 years. Prof. Dr. Somchart actually longed to be a surgeon but this was impossible due to his unfortunate allergy to the pre-operative hand cleanser used at that time. He decided instead to specialize in cardiology and internal medicine.

Between 1963 and 1965, he joined the fellowship program in Cardiology at Chicago's Michael Reese Hospital. In 1965, he was appointed as the Head of Clinical Hemodynamic Laboratory, Department of Medicine, Ottawa Civic Hospital, Ontario, Canada. In 1967, he achieved Diplomate of the American Board of Internal Medicine and the year later, Diplomate of the American Board of Cardiovascular Disease; he also became a fellow of the Canadian Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons.



In 1969, after a total of seven years in the United States and three years in Canada, he decided to come back to Thailand, because his father needed to undergo a cholecystectomy. Upon his return, he entered the Thai government service at the Faculty of Medicine Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University in Bangkok. He also established a private clinic in Ladya Road, close to his home, naming it the "*Dr. Somchart Clinic*". Many local newspapers wrote about him extensively because he was the first Thai physician at that time to have achieved an American Diplomate in both Internal Medicine and Cardiovascular Disease. His reputation grew, spreading dramatically by word of mouth.

After having taught Thai medical students for 16 years, he was a natural candidate to be an editor of the first cardiovascular textbooks that were composed and published in Thai language. The two textbooks became very famous because the details were clearly explained and thus easy to understand. They were offered to His Majesty King Bhumipol Adulyadej. His Majesty graciously distributed these textbooks to every district hospital in Thailand for public usage and medical reference.

In 1982, Prof. Dr. Somchart Lochaya had a chance to provide medical assistance to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Thereafter, he also followed His Majesty to remote areas and provided medical services to patients there. He held the King in the utmost esteem and was willing to endure any sacrifice to assist with the multifarious duties of His Majesty.

After 18 years working in a government hospital, Prof. Dr. Somchart understood well that the development of an excellent heart clinic in a competent private hospital could afford relief to patients from heart disease, and would reduce the risks they were exposed to when they travelled abroad for treatment. Therefore, in 1987 Prof. Dr. Somchart decided to join Bangkok Hospital. Bangkok Hospital made huge investments in both people and state of the art technology in order to develop its Heart Clinic into a one-stop service Heart Center. This was one of the turning points in Bangkok Hospital's history, as it became more clearly differentiated from other private hospitals and its reputation increased accordingly. The grand opening of Bangkok Heart Center (BHC) was held on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1989 and the then Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai served as the honorary Chair of ceremonies.



Over 10 years, Prof. Dr. Somchart and other team physicians at the BHC provided seamless medical treatment to more than 10,000 heart disease patients. The Professor took many responsible positions both in Bangkok Hospital and network hospitals, and various local organizations in Thailand. Prof. Dr. Somchart was well known for his competent medical skill, but was also loved for his generous personality. He was very friendly and never short of a sincere smile for the people surrounding him. His laugh was unique and easily recognizable. Although he worked very hard he never exhibited signs of weariness or discouragement. This was probably because he was lucky to have found a good balance between work and his beloved family.

Prof. Dr. Somchart passed away peacefully at the age of 66, on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2000 at Ramathibodi Hospital, Bangkok, Thailand after being diagnosed with acute leukemia. He was survived by his widow, M.R. Sasijuthapa Worrawan and 3 sons, Mr. Swechuk Lochaya, Mr. Khumsap Lochaya, and Mr. Jomsap Lochaya.

Bangkok Hospital members remember Professor Dr. Somchart Lochaya's untiring efforts and endeavors with heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation.