



**Lakshman Rao Chervu  
(1930–1988)  
Shanta Chervu  
(1937–1988)**

Sometime on December 31st, 1988, Dr. Lakshman Rao Chervu, Professor of Nuclear Medicine, Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center, and his wife, Dr. Shanta Chervu, Fellow in Geriatrics, Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center, were brutally murdered. Their deaths were a tragic loss of two fine and productive individuals.

Our first contact with Dr. Lakshman Rao Chervu, or Rao, as he preferred to be known during his time in the United States, was in 1969 when he wrote to Dr. Blaufox about the possibility of coming to his laboratory to begin a career in research medicine. Dr. Chervu had extremely impressive credentials. He trained at Andhra University, India, where he received a BS and MS degree in 1951. From there, he went to the BHABHA Atomic research center in India as a Scientific Officer, shortly after a brief tenure as an Instructor in Chemistry at the Andhra University. He remained at BHABHA between 1958 and 1968. During this time, he authored 18 original articles in the field of radiochemistry and also spent a brief time between 1956 and 1957 as a nuclear science and engineering trainee at the International School of Nuclear Science and Engineering at the Argonne National Laboratory. In 1960 he spent 2 years at McGill University in Montreal, where he obtained his PhD. Dr. Chervu achieved distinction at BHABHA but decided that he would rather pursue a career more directly related to serving his fellow man and work in an area of radiochemistry related to medicine. His first step in achieving this goal was to move to Canada in 1968 as a Research Associate at McGill University. In 1971, after completing negotiations which were begun in 1969, Rao came to the Einstein College of Medicine and he remained there for 18 years. During this time he achieved distinction in the field and numerous consultantships, among which were Research Collaborator at Brookhaven National Laboratory. Dr. Chervu was a valuable member of the Society of Nuclear Medicine, serving on numerous committees, and as an officer of the New York Chapter. He performed with distinction as a scientist and researcher, authoring 64 original articles and 18 chapters in textbooks, with numerous support grants from the National Institutes of Health and other institutions during his work here. In 1975, when the Department of Nuclear Medicine, Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center became unified across campus, Dr. Chervu set up the Central Radioisotope Laboratory of the Department,

which provides a resource to all of its three major teaching hospitals and the medical school. In this regard he added to his list of accomplishments and responsibilities, that of an Administrator and a Director of a laboratory responsible for clinical testing and diagnostic radioisotope distribution.

Dr. Chervu was always available to anyone from the faculty of the medical school or from any institution as a source of knowledge and support in the areas of radiochemistry and radiopharmacology. He was a hardworking man, whose interests were purely those of a scholar and of a humanist, determined to help others. In addition to his own accomplishments, Dr. Chervu leaves behind two fine and accomplished children, who will surely make a mark of distinction for themselves, and a record of dedication to the family and the kind of devotion that gave him the strength to not only carry out his own work, but to be able to support the family during a time that both of his children and his wife were in medical school.

He will be sorely missed and surely remembered.

*M. Donald Blafox, MD, PhD  
Leonard M. Freeman, MD*

**H**er many colleagues and friends suffered a great loss with the sudden tragic death of Shanta Chervu over the New Year's weekend. Following emigration from her native India and a brief tenure in Montreal, Shanta joined the Nuclear Medicine Department at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center in 1971, first as a technologist and subsequently as a supervisor of the department at the Hospital of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Her extensive academic background in the basic sciences and insatiable thirst for knowledge drove her to obtain technological certification from the American Society of Clinical Pathology, the American Registry of Radiologic Technology and the Nuclear Medicine Technology Board. An even more remarkable feat was her achievement of certification in Physics and Instrumentation from the American Board of Science in Nuclear Medicine. This was, indeed, a maverick and truly spectacular achievement for a technologist. Her unending desire for excellence motivated her to active participation in many research projects and completion of her MBA in Management Sciences in 1979 after 2 years of evening classes at Iona.

At this point in her life, her beloved children, Arun and Arti, were adults and although still a very involved mother, the parental demands had lessened. She was now 42 and if she ever was going to fulfill her life-long desire of becoming a physician, it had to be now. Her attendance at an offshore medical school separated her for periods of time from her husband Rao. Through their many long and lonely stretches of time apart, Shanta remained dedicated to her studies while Rao was steadfastly supportive.

There was never any question that she was ecstatic about realizing her dreams. She returned to New York to pursue her postgraduate training in Internal Medicine at Bronx Lebanon Hospital Center. At the time of her untimely passing, she had finished the first 6 months of a geriatric medicine fellowship at Montefiore.

Shanta was a very kind and gentle woman who genuinely enjoyed and was equally enjoyed by all of her colleagues. She was delighted by the fact that she was able to serve as a substitute mother for her medical school classmates in Grenada who were literally half her age. The wonderful, warm, and seemingly perpetual smile was an integral part of seeing and greeting Shanta in the department or on a visit. Her very special concerns and compassion for her patients were apparent to all. This love obsession for her fellow man permeated her very being.

In her brief 51 years on this earth, Shanta Chervu accomplished many extraordinary feats. However, in the minds of the many who knew and loved her, the remarkable human qualities that she possessed will shine brightly. Not only will we miss Shanta, but we will always remember her.

*Leonard M. Freeman, MD  
M. Donald Blafox, MD, PhD*

#### THE LAKSHMAN RAO AND SHANTA CHERVU MEMORIAL FUND

Rao and Shanta's friends and colleagues have established The Lakshman Rao and Shanta Chervu Memorial Fund to celebrate their memory. Donations to this fund which will support a lectureship and research fellowship may be sent to Dr. M. Donald Blafox, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, 1300 Morris Park Avenue, Bronx, New York 10461, and should be made out to The Albert Einstein College of Medicine.