

# Appreciation: Professor Simon Kim Suvarna

Colleagues pay respect to the life of Professor Kim Suvarna.

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**The College wishes to express deepest gratitude and pay tribute to the late Professor Suvarna (1960–2024), a distinguished member of the College and contributor to many guidelines. His memory lives on through the impact of his work. We are honoured to have had the privilege of collaborating with him.**

## **Dr Kirsty Lloyd, Consultant Histopathologist, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

A leveller of hierarchy, Kim was happy to indulge anyone's curiosity with his enthusiasm for teaching and would include the assisting lab staff in discussions about cases and interesting findings at the bench. Histopathology trainees are particularly grateful for Kim's contribution and role in modernising the autopsy component of the FRCPath exam into the Certificate of Higher Autopsy Training (CHAT) and raising the standard of post-mortem examination. Tales of Professor Suvarna waking up medical students in lectures to ask them questions are also legendary.

This is how we met: I approached Professor Julian Burton to arrange an autopsy training secondment and he introduced me to Kim, who was then head of school in the Yorkshire Deanery. I relocated to Sheffield for 3 months in 2014. Despite Kim's attempts at being contrary to get a rise out of me, he did not succeed and we worked very well together. He set clear aims and objectives to the placement in a methodical manner. We successfully completed an audit, a small research project, a journal article and a conference presentation, in addition to covering the complete CHAT curriculum.

Recurrent characteristics in his successful training relationships were his generosity with his time and his willingness to share and pass on opportunities, inviting collaboration.

During my secondment, Kim sowed the seed of an idea that I could come to Sheffield when I was a consultant and that, in succession planning for his retirement, he would mentor and train me in cardiothoracic pathology. In 2019, Dr Eu-Wing Toh, Kim and I became part of a cardiac referral team of 3. Kim really enjoyed our biweekly sessions, imparting the wealth of his experience and accelerating our learning at a pace beyond what we could have done without his experience.

Kim maintained clear boundaries between his personal family life and his professional work. I was exposed to both sides as he, his wife Grace and their daughters Elara and Miranda generously involved me in their family life when I relocated from London to Sheffield to work. We 'bubbled' in the COVID-19 lockdowns. A committed gardener, tennis player and a man who loved a grocery bargain, Kim was never short of a story to share about his life experiences or work cases.

I really miss him. There is a large Kim-shaped hole in the department. I once joked to another eminent pathologist that I would like to download his brain. We are very lucky that Kim has partly done this by publishing over 125 peer-reviewed articles, including being a contributing author to key consensus statements published by the Association for European Cardiovascular Pathology, of which he was an active board member for many years. He has edited/co-edited key textbooks on cardiovascular pathology, adult autopsy pathology, post-mortem CT and Bancroft's Theory and Practice of Histological Techniques.

Kim was the driving force behind the UK Cardiovascular Pathology Network, arranging annual educational meetings in Sheffield and contributing to many autopsy and cardiovascular activities in the Royal College of Pathologists.

Only ever a text or a phone call away, Kim was always willing to discuss conundrums posed by death investigations, drawing the jigsaw of death on a white board to drill down into why that person died at that moment. The autopsy-active pathologists are continuing this style of open discussion around cases. He leaves a strong legacy of teaching and training excellence in the department he worked in as a consultant and across the UK and Europe.

# **Dr Asha K Dube, Consultant Histopathologist, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

I trained with Kim for 5 years and afterwards worked in the same department for my entire consultant career. His exacting training methods hid his caring side and his mission to do the best for the patients whose specimens we were handling. They have stood me in good stead through all the years from then.

On a personal level, he had an open heart and keen sense of humour. His untimely death will have lasting repercussions for those who were close to him.

# **Dr Maidie Yeung, Consultant Histopathologist, Imperial College, London**

“Welcome to histopathology. Call me Kim; I am your head of school. For the next few years, I will train you as a pathologist. You can come to me any time, tell me anything you want. Over the years, I have seen it all and the trainees have thrown everything at me. Hopefully, by the end of the training, you will have a little bit of me in you as a pathologist.”

That was how Professor Kim Suvarna introduced himself on my first day as a histopathology trainee. It was not the first time I met Kim; I attended some of his teaching sessions when I was a surgical trainee. My impression of him was that he was an old school consultant: straight and firm, he challenged me at the appropriate time and I would always learn something new afterwards.

Am I not glad that my first impression was correct? Throughout my histopathology training, Kim was always straight and firm. His teaching was always at the appropriate level and used some outside-the-box methods. I still remember the numerous times he asked me to describe an object on his desk while checking cases with him when I was an ST1 trainee. I hated it at first, but now, looking back, thanks to this little game we played, I can describe the morphology of my cases without much difficulty.

Over the years, Kim was always supportive and honest. He would not hold back criticism, or as we trainees said – “we’ve been Kimmed”. But this was all for our own good. Kim did not just teach us about pathology, but life in general. He cared about the overall wellbeing of the trainees. I could always discuss issues outside pathology with him. His support never changed. His office door was always open; even when I had become a consultant, I could always walk into his office and get his advice.

In every discussion we had and the game we played, Kim's aim was to make us well rounded pathologists and better doctors. When my trainee made the same mistakes I did years before, I found myself doing the same as Kim did with me in the past. Maybe Kim did impart some of his traits to me.

When his death was announced, 1 of my colleagues told me that, even though he had never met Kim in person, he had greatly benefited from Kim's books. This was Kim – a great pathologist and a great teacher. So many of us were influenced by him, directly or indirectly. I am forever honoured and grateful that he was my mentor.

Kim, thank you for everything.

## Meet the authors



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