



The Royal College of Pathologists  
Pathology: the science behind the cure

# Appreciation: Professor Anita Maria Borges

Professor Anita Maria Borges, who shaped cancer histopathology in India, passed away on 18 September 2025. Professor Kikkeri Naresh reflects on her legacy.

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## Formative years and return to India (1966–1980)

Professor Anita Borges – the eldest child of Dr Ernest Borges (a pioneer of cancer surgery in India) and Mrs Gracie Borges – studied medicine and postgraduate pathology in Mumbai. She specialised in cancer pathology at the Royal Marsden Hospital, earning her fellowship of the Royal College of Pathologists, and later studied at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. Despite opportunities to build a successful career in the West, she chose to return to India, to Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH), the institution central to her father's career.



## **The TMH years: The Borges revolution (1981–2003)**

During her 23 years at TMH, where she later headed surgical pathology, Professor Borges was an unstoppable force, demanding excellence from herself and everyone around her. Not only was she the best cancer pathologist, her impact elevated standards in diagnostics, training, patient care and research to heights rarely seen before.

Professor Borges believed a good pathologist was a 'doctor's doctor', who should be deeply involved in clinical aspects and guiding oncologists. She viewed morphological and immunophenotypic descriptions not as ends in themselves, but as tools for achieving precise, clinically relevant diagnoses. She meticulously discussed cases and educated the entire oncology team.

Her trainees, welcomed from across the country, found their time with her to be a life-changing experience, characterised by hours of in-depth case discussions. Her only requirement was a genuine attitude towards learning. Simultaneously, her exceptional oratory skills and ability to clearly convey complex concepts made her a highly sought-after educator at national events; she was the academic equivalent of a rock star. She also fostered a dynamic research collaboration between the adjacent Cancer Research Institute's scientists.

# A national institution (2004–2025)

Following her retirement from TMH, Professor Borges continued her mission by helping establish 3 exceptional, world-class cancer pathology laboratories. These facilities became immediate hubs for challenging national referrals, providing precision diagnoses supported by cutting-edge companion diagnostics – infrastructure often unmatched elsewhere in the country.

Now more accessible than ever, she trained dozens of junior colleagues and visiting pathologists. Professor Borges generously self-funded her extensive travel, often travelling weekly to educate and inspire students and practitioners. During the COVID-19 pandemic she transitioned to online teaching, reaching a global audience of up to 1,600 participants from over 30 countries each week. Her team recently launched the Tata Memorial Centre Travelling School of Oncopathology, an India-wide hub-and-spoke programme involving 15 medical colleges (hubs), each working with 15–20 local colleges (spokes), focused on improving quality standards.

Professor Borges passed away from a myocardial infarction in remote northern India, while on one of her teaching missions. Her extraordinary life, characterised by profound professional rigour, immense generosity and an unconstrained passion for teaching, will be celebrated and fondly remembered by her vast family of adoring students and friends. She remains a role model worthy of meticulous emulation.

## Meet the author

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