

IP university to establish endowment in memory of biochemist Y Subbarow

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New Delhi, January 15: The Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University has decided to establish an endowment in the memory and honour of pioneering Indian biochemist Yellapragada Subbarow, whose 125th birth anniversary is being celebrated this year.

The announcement was made by university Vice Chancellor Dr Mahesh Verma on the occasion of the 15th Subbarow memorial lecture held in the university. The lecture has been held every year without a break. The endowment will make it a permanent activity. An exhibition on the life and work of Subbarow was also held on the occasion.

“The contribution of Dr Subbarow to the world of medicine and the humanity is immense and we all owe a debt of gratitude to him for the discovering he made,” Dr Verma observed.

Delivering the memorial lecture on “challenges with development of biotech therapeutics,” Dr Anurag S. Rathore, coordinator of the Centre of Excellence in Biopharmaceutical Technology at IIT Delhi, said “pharmaceuticals today are the biggest exports for India and we are globally regarded as the place for producing economical, safe and efficacious medicines.” The centre has been funded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

During the past decade, he said, there has been significant interest in development of biotherapeutic products. “It remains to be seen if we can replicate our success with pharmaceuticals in this class of products given scientific and regulatory challenges in successful development and commercialization of these products.” These challenges include process development and control, characterization of biotherapeutic products, continuous processing, and multivariate data analysis.



Dr Rathore delivering the Y Subbarow memorial lecture

Prof K K Aggarwal, dean of University School of Biotechnology, said the life of Subbarow provides an opportunity to students as well as the faculty to get motivated to serve the humanity through their research contribution.

SubbaRow migrated to Harvard in 1923 from Madras Ayurvedic College and made several medical discoveries and syntheses including the phosphate estimation method (23,900), phosphocreatine, ATP, vitamin folic acid, anti-cancer drugs methotrexate and aminopterin and antibiotic Aureomycin (the parent of tetracycline) and anti-filarial Diethyl Carbamazine many of which are used till date. To recognize SubbaRow and his contribution, The Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, which awards the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine, used to have a portrait of SubbaRow.



Dr Mahesh Verma and SPK Gupta at the exhibition

S P K Gupta, biographer of Subbarow, said “he did not get due credit for what he did in the field of molecular biology because the US was then a secondary scientific power to Britain whose science bureaucracy was jealous of maintaining the then position of the United Kingdom. He wanted at one time to continue in India the research he had begun at Harvard but again the British colonialists did not let him have the facilities he needed.” That is why all his path-breaking discoveries of vitamins, antibiotics, anti-cancer treatments and the anti-filarial were made in the US.

Gupta said the lecture series started in 2002 was a landmark and was made possible due to active support of successive deans - Dr K. Kannan, Prof P. C. Sharma and Prof N. Raghuram. He thanked the Vice-chancellor for agreeing to institutionalize this Memorial Lecture series by formal budgeting a university endowment. He announced a contribution of Rupees one lakh for the same.

Keywords: pharmaceuticals, biotech therapeutics, vitamin, folic acid, anti-filarial, cancer, Harvard