

## In Memoriam Vinay Sundaram (1978–2022)

Vinay Sundaram, MD, MSc, beloved husband, father, and faculty member at the Cedars-Sinai Karsh Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, and at the Cedars-Sinai Comprehensive Transplant Centre, died on July 14, 2022.

Vinay was an Associate Professor of Medicine at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and associate professor of Clinical Medicine at UCLA School of Medicine. Vinay was born in Paterson, NJ and attended New York University where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics. He received his medical degree from the NYU School of Medicine. He completed his internal medicine residency training at the University of Virginia, then his gastroenterology fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh. He obtained a Master of Science in Clinical Research during his gastroenterology fellowship. He completed his formal medical training by completing a transplant hepatology fellowship at Beth Israel Deaconess. Upon completion of his training, he worked as a clinical instructor at Beth Israel Deaconess, Harvard Medical School, then Assistant Professor at Loma Linda Medical Centre, before joining the Hepatology faculty at Cedars-Sinai in 2013.

(RJ) From the day I met Vinay, I knew he was very special. We were introduced by my uncle who is a long-standing family friend. Although we only had a very short time together at this holiday party where we met, I was immediately struck by Vinay's clarity of thought, a sense of purpose, a vision about how he would explore an area that was a huge unmet need. This was about 7 or 8 years back when he had just about joined the transplantation faculty at Cedars. The diagnostic criteria for a syndrome referred to as acute-on-chronic liver failure (ACLF) had just been defined. This is a devastating condition associated with very high short-term mortality rates. This chance meeting was the beginning of something very special for the ACLF field, which had suddenly found a champion. Vinay was going to go on and build the foundations for the safe use of liver transplantation.

The rest is really history.....within a matter of weeks, he produced the first manuscript we published together and over the next 6-7 years, he has gone on to publish over 100 articles in high impact journals including *Hepatology*, *Liver Transplantation*, *Journal of Hepatology*, *Gastroenterology*, *American Journal of Gastroenterology*, *American Journal of Transplantation*, and many others. He served on the editorial board of *Hepatology*, *American Journal of Gastroenterology*, and *Hepatology Communications*, and was a guest editor of *Clinical Liver Diseases*. His work argued strongly for the benefit of transplantation for patients with ACLF, as well as highlighting the inequity of access these patients had on the transplant waiting list and providing clear guidance on patient selection and defining limits of transplantation. In the ACLF/liver transplant circles, Vinay's is a 'household' name, and his work is referred to constantly. His research has already had a massive impact on clinical practice, with many transplant programmes allocating organs with priority to patients with ACLF, which has certainly saved lives. Rather than rest on his accolades, he helped



conceptualise and develop the international CHANCE study, which will define once and for all the role of liver transplantation for patients with ACLF.

He was truly what we call the 'poster-boy' speaking at innumerable conferences, establishing the MODEL consortium in the US, writing pointed editorials, debating the best in the world, and providing the nay-sayers with data to dispel any doubts about changing practice. We often wonder how he had done all this in such a short time despite running a full-time transplant programme and contributing so much on a day-to-day basis to his family. The answer is probably reflected in his collaborative personality, high intellect, clarity of thought, vision, honesty, and extremely hard work. If he promised to deliver something, it was always there exactly at that time.

Although we (RJ) probably only met face to face 8-10 times, we became good friends through our phone calls, which were always on a Saturday or Sunday. We talked about our families, the politics of our endeavour, our shared vision but always about the 'unanswered' questions.

Vinay was passionate about medical education and was a prolific mentor to dozens of trainees. He held leadership roles in professional societies including serving as chair of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) Membership and Mentorship Committee, and chair of the AASLD Clinical Practice SIG Education Subcommittee. In recognition of his esteem and his work, he was awarded the Fellowship of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (FAASLD). He also served on the UNOS Membership and Professional Standards Committee, was a member of the Chronic Liver

Disease Foundation Board of Advisors and served on the Medical Advisory Committee for the American Liver Foundation. He was instrumental in the creation of the transplant hepatology fellowship program at Cedars-Sinai.

Vinay was also legendary for his dedication to his patients. He regularly called his patients with lab results, even if they were normal. His patients loved him for it. He earned a perfect patient satisfaction rating every year at Cedars-Sinai. He was also passionate about building a strong academic division. He tirelessly scouted potential faculty recruits and helped build the hepatology programme at Cedars-Sinai. His enthusiasm and dedication were truly unparalleled.

We want to share with you a few brief quotes from the great and good of our field on their views about Vinay...

*'Truly passionate clinician with amazing thought clarity'*

*'His work changed the lives of patients with ACLF, giving them new hope'*

*'I witnessed him saving so many lives'*

*'Vinay has been a leader in ACLF research'*

*'His work is truly seminal'*

*'Amazing advocate for emerging scholars'*

*'Incredible man and medical doctor'*

The accolades continue to flow.

For all those that knew him, Vinay was a rare gem, a very good friend, a treasured faculty member at Cedars-Sinai, and a thought leader in ACLF. His honesty, hard work, loyalty to the subject and his work has changed the field. In a final act of

devotion to patients and to the field of transplantation which he loved, he saved multiple lives by donating his organs. Vinay has left a tremendous legacy and he will never be forgotten.

### Acknowledgements

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Dr Sundaram's family wishes to memorialize his legacy through the AASLD Foundation to support early career development, mentoring and educational opportunities for many generations of health care providers and increasing public awareness of liver disease. To make donations towards this cause please visit: AASLD Scholarship <http://my.aasldfoundation.org/drvinaysundaram> or 'Cedars Sinai' <https://giving.cedars-sinai.edu/VinaySundaram>.

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