

OBITUARY

## Richard Cash

SANJAY A PAI



On December 8, 2018, I received a mail from Richard Cash with two attached PDFs; one on the history of the development of Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT); and the second, a recent commentary from *The Lancet* commemorating 50 years of ORT.

I replied:

*I have been telling my colleagues about you and the trials ....*

*My fascination for this stems in large part from... the statement from *The Lancet* ...[that ORT] "was potentially the most important medical advance this century". Words that I remember without having to look them up. I was in my final year of UG studies (MBBS) then and was impressed by many things - the fact that such a simple observation in science could have such important lifechanging ramifications.*

*Please do remember to send me an inscribed copy of one of your articles.*

As a medical student, I had been fascinated by the simplicity and the life-saving power of ORT (and by the statement in *The Lancet* about sodium absorption in the small intestine). Though I had initially met Richard Cash at the First National Bioethics Conference (NBC-1) in 2005, and at many other NBCs after that, I had had no idea that the Richard Cash of ORT fame was the same Richard Cash that I had been interacting with for years. For someone whose discovery was responsible for having saved millions of lives, he was amazingly modest. He was also prompt and kept his word and sent me, by courier, a photocopy of his classic paper.

At the last NBC that he attended, in 2018, I gave him a lift to his hotel; during the ride, he, Bebe Loff, and I listened to music and discussed U2 and *How many roads must a man go down?* Later on, we continued the conversation on email, where he informed me, "... I, being of an older generation, would opt for more from 50s and 60s rock (if you count jazz, the Sinatra's of the world etc, my list would grow) and probably not have much after the 80s (and that would be stretching it)."

Richard was a strong and indomitable supporter of *IJME* and of the NBCs. His last publication in *IJME* was on a topic that concerns all of us: corruption in the pharma industry. It was his review of Katherine Eban's book on Ranbaxy [See: <https://doi.org/10.20529/IJME.2020.028>] in which he was quite clear that "Penalties should fit the crime, and those found guilty be held accountable beyond simply paying a fine, or having no punishment at all."

The stature of Richard Cash was such that, at the NBC held in New Delhi in 2010, Aamir Jafarey from Karachi referred to Richard as the "Sachin Tendulkar of medical ethics".

Richard Cash (1941-2024) was a true citizen of the world: he was American, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and undoubtedly, belonged to many more people.

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