

moments we spent together in 2022. Sitting on their backyard veranda, feeding turkeys and other birds, and enjoying time in the

garden, we had deep conversations about public health challenges, spirituality (Stella's passion), politics and the importance of being ethical, committed and service oriented in public health. I also have cherished memories of strolling through Cambridge with Richard as he pointed out buildings, museums, and local parks. Richard had a sweet tooth, and we often wandered over to Peet's Pies, a nearby bakery, where he would regularly treat himself to a pie or two — much to Stella's amusement and concern, as he was meant to limit his consumption of desserts!

The last time I saw Richard was in November 2023, during a work trip to Boston. Earlier that year, when he visited Dhaka to teach, he mentioned that he wouldn't be returning to teach in person in 2024, because "the journey was too long." I was deeply saddened by this news but still held onto the hope that we might convince him to return in person someday. When I travelled to attend a meeting in Boston, Richard and Stella took me to one of their favorite restaurants. As usual, we covered a wide range of topics over dinner. I will miss his humor, sharp wit, and vast knowledge — not just about public health, but also politics, religion, history, current events, and so much more. Richard was someone I deeply respected and

admired for living life on his own terms. He was not driven by the traditional ambitions that often fuel people in our field. Instead, he was ambitious and passionate about making a meaningful impact on the health and lives of vulnerable people — through his pioneering work with ORT, his research, and his dedication to teaching and mentoring countless students and colleagues, including me.

Even after receiving the prestigious Prince Mahidol Award, he remained humble and grounded. Meeting Richard was truly a transformative experience for me. He was an exceptional and rare individual, and his loss will be deeply felt by all who loved him.

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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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