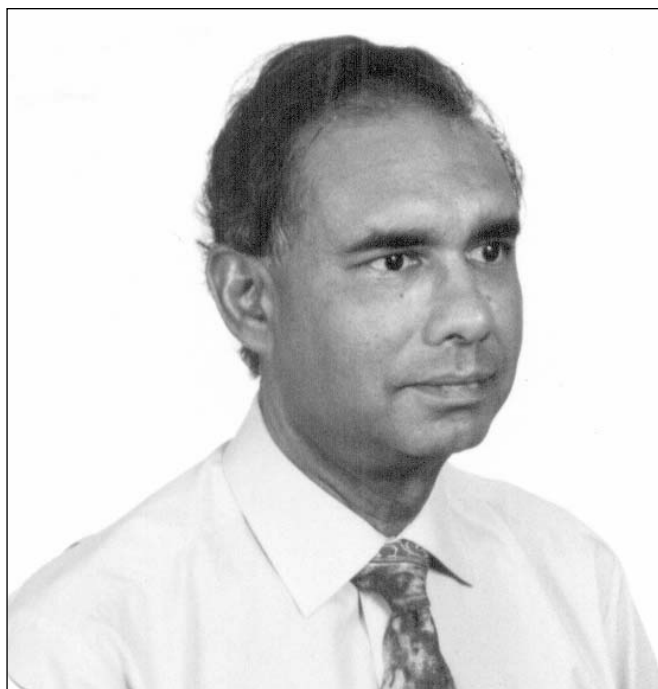


## Tribute to Dr Lennox Matadial



**Dr Lennox Matadial**

Sir Winston Churchill in one of his solemn moments, in paying tribute to a fallen friend, said and I quote “every time someone leaves us it diminishes all of us.” Tonight, we are here to pay respect to someone who spent all his adult life serving mankind in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at The University of the West Indies. Although he is still standing tall, his departure will take away a personal flare and flavour from us that will be greatly missed.

Franz Fanon in his book *Black Skin White Masks* wrote “Man is human only to the extent he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognized by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, that will remain the theme of his actions. It is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend.”

It was in 1977 during my internship period in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology that I had my first encounter with two registrars in Drs Matadial and Kalipershadsingh. That was my first job and they taught me the fundamentals of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. It was that experience which left such an indelible mark in my mind that I knew from then that I wanted to specialize in Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

Dr Matadial had an uncanny dedication to task accomplishment. He was a stickler to time and was punctual to a fault. On Saturday morning ward-rounds, he would

arrive before everyone and I, who had grown accustomed to what Dennis Chung’s article in the Daily Gleaner called “Jamaican Time” would get my usual admonishment for arriving late. He would assume a military posture and stretch his left hand to peer at his watch to note the time of my arrival and in askance would utter the words “Freds, I first you again.”

He speaks well and is a fine example of the classic Latin student. Much of that credit must be to his upbringing and to the values inculcated in him by his parents in New Amsterdam in British Guiana, now Guyana, his father an Attorney-at-Law, now deceased, and his dear mother who resides in Miami. Lennox was always impeccably dressed and carried himself well, an example which set the tone in the Department up to this day. This must be a credit to his dear wife Daphne whom I am told is a stickler for detailing her husband’s deportment.

He was a fine teacher and taught his students to pay attention to details which one would normally overlook. This feat is paying dividends throughout the landscape and seascape of the Caribbean by the many physicians practising today as products of that moulding.

A clinician par excellence, he passed on skills to us to help us develop our clinical acumen long before the changes ushered in by the inexorable thrust of the advancing technology and the dynamics of globalization.

Lennox saw the need to enhance his knowledge base by taking on numerous preceptorships. He did a one year Fellowship in Feto-Maternal medicine at the Chicago’s Lying-in Hospital in 1974 under the preceptorship of Professor Luis Cibils and Frederick Zuspan; a WHO fellowship in Fertility Management at the University in Singapore with Professor SS Rutnam in 1980; Reproductive Medicine at Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis in 1982 with Dr Arpad Caspo and Reproductive Biology at the Johns Hopkins University with Professor Theodore King in 1983.

His contribution to the discipline of Obstetrics and Gynaecology was well recognized as he became a fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Fellow of the International College of Surgeons. He served The University of the West Indies in several capacities as Chairman of the Ethical Committee (1992–1996), past president of Grabham Society (1983–1985) and Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, The University of the West Indies (1987–1990).

His outreach programmes span the landscape of the region as he imparted his knowledge to doctors, midwives and nurses as he organized courses in Perinatal Medicine. He understood the values of critical learning and critical thinking

as part of the linear exploration of those of us who tenant planet earth. His guidance added much to our fountain of wisdom as we struggled in conquest of the truth in the textured history of where we are coming from, indeed the knowledge to create the path to take us to a new world.

Dr Matadial has influenced those of us who are left behind and we are privileged to be in a position to take up the challenge that our University, the bastion of higher learning in its global repositioning, must develop strategies to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage so that regional economies can benefit from its openness and mutual access to world markets. We must acknowledge the role that his dear Daphne has played in his life from which we have benefitted greatly. Sometimes she was there personally to offer her advice when the moment was opportune.

Your influence has left behind imitators but we recognize your departure as part of the unending dynamic process of change. The late Michael Manley reminds us in his seminal work that change must not be seen to only involve a

journey from a predetermined point of departure to a protracted point of arrival but that we are just part of the continuum.

Those of us who are left behind to continue the mission to develop our people will remember the tremendous role you played in guiding us to adapt to the new technology which will no doubt be the medicine of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

On behalf of the members of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and Child Health, the many doctors and nurses and all the people in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean whose lives you have touched and made a difference to, thank you for being there when it mattered most.

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