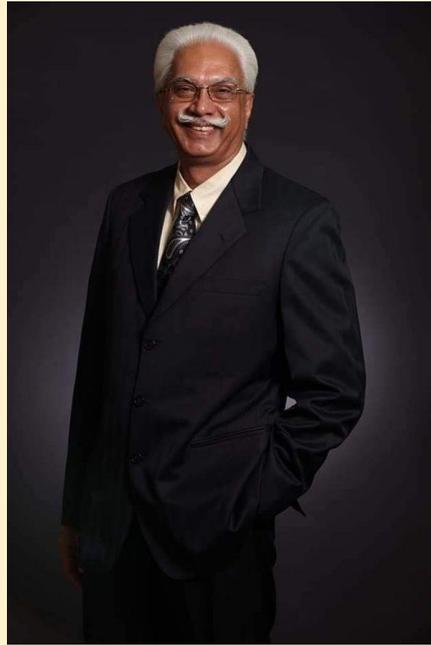


Dr. Jarnail Singh Khosa

Former Chairman Civil Aviation Medical Board, Singapore



ALPA-S notes with great sorrow the passing on of a close friend and mentor to the pilot community on 6th Feb 2021. Dr. Jarnail, or Jarnail as he liked to be called, was part of a team of aero medically trained doctors who in the early 1990's transformed the face of Civil Aviation Medicine not only in Singapore but also globally. To appreciate this, let's look at the man first as we choose to honour his legacy.

Background:

Dr. Jarnail began his career by attending medical school on an Indian government scholarship at the Government Medical College, Punjab University, Pattiala, India. After graduation, he returned to Singapore to undertake his National Service in 1978. As part of his Medical Officers cadet training, he became acquainted with aviation medicine which though a new field at that time, fascinated him nonetheless. On earning his commission, he chose to sign on with the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) specialising in Aviation Medicine. He later attended further training in aviation medicine in Farnborough in 1983.

On completion of this training, he returned to the newly formed Aeromedical Centre and was a pioneer in establishing the RSAF Aeromedical Centre and served as Head of Aviation Physiology Training. After attending his G training program at the U.S. Air force School of Aviation Medicine, he went on to establish the G training program for RSAF pilots.

In 1993, he was seconded as Dy. Chairman together with Col. Lim Meng Kin and Col. Peng Chung Mien to the newly constituted Civil Aviation Medical Board replacing the old board with doctors now specially trained in aviation medicine. He subsequently took over the Chairmanship in 1997.

Between 2001 and 2004, he chaired the ULR Task Force that looked at studying and then validating the alertness of crew on ULR flights with SQ pilots being at the forefront of these studies.. The findings of this task force was shared internationally. Fatigue Risk management System (FRMS) regulations and guidance materials were all crafted out of these studies.

In 2003, Dr. Jarnail initiated and coordinated the ICAO led anti-SARS program. He subsequently became the Chairman of the newly formed ICAO Medical Provision Study Group (MPSG) in 2004 to re-look at medical licensing standards globally based on Evidence based science. This group under his leadership totally transformed licensing standards for pilots and allowed more pilots to continue flying than was previously possible. As head

of this august body, he also initiated and coordinated the ICAO led Anti-Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) program. He continued to spearhead the ICAO Cooperative Arrangement for the Prevention of the Spread of Communicable disease through Air Travel (CAPSCA). His appointment as CAPSCA Global technical Advisor carried on till his passing. Concurrently since 2014, he was also advisor to the WHO Ebola Activation Plan project.

To add to his outstanding achievements both locally and globally, Dr. Jarnail was elected as the first Asian Director to the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine.

In 2012, ALPA-S in recognition of his outstanding contributions, elected Dr. Jarnail Singh Khosa to be a Fellow Member of the Airline Pilots Association Singapore.

ALPA-S

Dr. Jarnail's association with ALPAS began way back in 1992. To appreciate his work and that of his colleagues, it is essential that we understand the medical licensing practice that existed at that time. The medical doctors who undertook pilots and Air Traffic Controllers medicals were not specifically trained in aeromedicine and were in many ways eminent doctors and professors of medicines in their respective fields. Assessment was based in many ways on subjective feelings as many old timers will attest to. The prevailing psyche was that 'if anything happens to you and I am on the a/c, we will all die'. This was to summarise the prevailing feeling among doctors of that period. As a result, medical groundings were more common as the certifying doctors did not keep up with the prevailing doctrine in aeromedicine.

There was little appreciation of a pilots work environment, Incapacitation Training that pilots were subjected to and the 1% rule. The 1% rule is essentially the acceptable risk of an incapacitation in a multi-crew environment. This rule has stood the test of time. Thanks to the exposure that your ALPAS representative at that time had through attendance at Human Performance Meetings of IFALPA, this knowledge of a fast evolving aero-medical field that our local specialists failed to keep up with was brought back to the Principal Officers.

At a meeting called for by ALPAS, the Company, CAAS and the medical board in 1994, the decision was reached that the military aero medically trained doctors would now form the newly reconstituted Civil Aviation Medical Board. The whole licensing scene has changed for the better for our pilots.

Dr. Jarnail went on to become Chairman of the Medical Provision Study Group of ICAO. This group comprising of aero medically trained doctors and regulators sat down to re-look at what is called Evidence Based Medicine and how this should be applied to the pilot profession. Evidence based medicine (EBM) is essentially the conscientious, explicit, judicious and reasonable use of modern best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual pilots. This is an on-going landmark work that transformed the Manual of Civil Aviation Medicine as it relates to Pilots and Air Traffic Controllers. As a result of this momentous work, the philosophy that Dr. Jarnail sought to impart to all he came across was to "keep pilots flying well to their retirement age". Many of us including the contributor have benefitted from this landmark work.

We are grateful that as a Singaporean, Dr. Jarnail was accorded countless recognitions for his sterling work. For his outstanding contributions to international aerospace medicine, Dr Singh was honoured with the 2011 Won Chuel Kay Award by the Aerospace Medical Association and the Public Administration Medal (Silver) at the 2015 National Day Awards. Dr. Jarnail went on to further assume the appointment of President, International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine in September 2015.

Dr. Jarnail Singh is survived by his wife Prof. Emeritus Charanjit Kaur, his son Dr. Gurpal Singh an eminent Orthopaedic surgeon and his daughter Dr. Gurpreet Kaur .

Submitted by: Capt. Suresh Menon