

Meet our Editor

Dr Ashok Agarwal



Starting his career in 1972 as he attended Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India, Ashok Agarwal gained his BSc in 1975, MSc in 1977, and his doctoral degree in 1983. He was fortunate to be invited to conduct his research in the Reproductive Physiology Laboratory of Professor CJ Dominic, a well-known leader in mammalian reproductive pheromones, mammalian reproduction, and fertility control. His doctoral research centred on investigating the epididymal histology, histochemistry, and biochemistry of several locally available mammalian species from a comparative point of view. The intense training he received as part of his doctoral dissertation was instrumental in deciding his future career choice in the area of mammalian reproductive biology. An immediate fillip to his career came when he was awarded a post-doctoral fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation in New York.

Beginning his training in the summer of 1984 at Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, he worked in the Urology Research Laboratory of the Brigham and Women's Hospital. Early research published from Harvard was centred on investigating the anti-fertility effects of gossypol in animal models and then on male contraception. This widening background strengthened his focus on male infertility and andrology. He recalls with pleasure the wonderful stimulus he received while working with his senior colleague and close friend in Harvard, Dr Kevin R Loughlin, currently Professor of Urology at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Kevin is a urologist and his inquisitive mind has a flair for simplifying complex basic science research into clinically relevant information.

His post-doctoral training now complete, Ashok gained valuable experience in managing a busy clinical facility from 1986. Appointed Director of the Clinical Andrology Laboratory in Newton, Massachusetts, he became Instructor in Surgery in the Division of Urology at Harvard in 1988, and Co-ordinator of the Andrology Division in the Reproductive Endocrinology Laboratory. Studying andrology and directing and conducting research in male infertility gave him newer and wider research skills, which led Harvard to promote him to Assistant Professor in the Division of Urology and Director of Male Infertility Research.

Recruited by The Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Ohio in 1993

as Head of Andrology, Ashok built the Clinical Andrology Laboratory from the ground up as one of the finest diagnostic facilities of its kind in the United States. It provides a full range of diagnostic modalities for infertile couples and reproductive tissue banking (cryopreservation) facilities for patients with cancer. Large numbers of clinicians, scientists, and technicians were trained as he developed a research program in andrology and male infertility in the Glickman Urological Institute. His position expanded to include research in all facets of male and female reproductive endocrinology and sexual dysfunction in a joint research programme. He received strong support from Professors Andrew Novick and Tommaso Falcone, respectively, while his senior colleague and close friend, Dr Anthony Thomas, a foremost male infertility specialist in the USA, gave constant advice.

Ashok remains fully active in basic and clinical research. More than 60 basic scientists and clinical researchers have been trained and 50 or more medical, undergraduate, and high school students have worked in his laboratory. His research interests now include the role of oxidative stress, DNA integrity, apoptosis in the pathophysiology of male and female reproduction, the cryopreservation of spermatozoa in patients with cancer, epididymal physiology, and the pathophysiology of sexual dysfunction. He remains passionate about his work as he focuses his laboratory on addressing issues directly bearing on the treatment of patients with infertility or sexual dysfunction.

A prodigious writer, Ashok has published more than 225 scientific papers and review articles in peer-reviewed journals and 20 book chapters. In addition, he has been very active in delivering papers at national and international scientific meetings. He is now a member and office bearer of several professional societies, including the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, American Society of Andrology, American Urological Association, Society for the Study of Male Reproduction, Society for the Study of Male Reproduction and Urology, and Society for Basic Urologic Research. Serving on the Editorial Board of the *Asian Journal of Andrology*, the *National Journal of Andrology*, and *Reproductive BioMedicine Online*, he is an ad hoc reviewer for over two dozen journals. Often invited as a guest speaker to more than 20 countries, he has directed a dozen or more andrology laboratory and ART workshops. The research programme at The Cleveland Clinic is now accepted as a leader in research into reproductive and sexual dysfunction in the USA and by prestigious programmes worldwide. Ashok is delighted and privileged to continue his work at the Cleveland Clinic today.

His wife, Meenu, is a great supporter of his work. He loves to spend time with his family, including his sons, Rishi (16) and Neil (7). Ashok likes travelling and meeting people, enjoys gardening, and retains his philosophy of life. He advises juniors to strive for the best and how the difference between extraordinary and ordinary is just 'extra'.