

Dr. Rishma Dhillon Pai

Life Comes to a Full Circle

Dr Rishma Dhillon Pai is an honorary visiting consultant obstetrician, gynaecologist, and IVF specialist at the Lilavati Hospital and Research Centre, Mumbai.

She has been an Honorary Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at Jaslok Hospital. She was the Coordinator and Head of the Department of Gynaecology at Jaslok Hospital and Research Centre, for three years. She is a Consultant Gynaecologist at 'Every Woman Cliniq' at Kempes Corner and Bandra, Mumbai. She is a visiting IVF Consultant at the Babies and Us Fertility; at IVF Centre, Opera House, Mumbai, the Fortis La Femme Hospital, New Delhi; and at the Fortis Hospital, Mohali, Chandigarh.

An All-rounder

Dr Rishma grew up in Chandigarh. She went to Carmel Convent School, which laid the foundation of excellent education as well as the overall development of her personality. Besides excelling in debates, elocutions, she did skating, gymnastics, played football, participated in dramas, read books, and yet managed to top the class. She was a national roller-skating champion for five years in a row. Besides representing Chandigarh at the national level in football, she was a state-level swimmer as well. She owes it all to her parents who gave her and her siblings, all the possible opportunities to learn, play, explore and travel on their own.



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Creating Her Own Mark

At the age of fifteen, she moved to Mumbai to join college, as her sister Poonam Dhillon had already joined Bollywood and had become a movie star then. From an all-girls school and extremely protected environment, the prospect of travelling to college by the crowded local train, attending a co-ed college and adjusting to a new language was intimidating and scary to her, but her focus and dedication kept her going. She got admission in Jai Hind College and spent two years working day and night so as to achieve the excellent marks required to get into medical college. Despite widely travelling, socialising with friends, and other extra-

curricular activities, she still secured 97 percent marks in 12th standard, and thus got into the best medical college in Mumbai – Seth G. S. Medical College and KEM Hospital. She says, "Teenage years taught me that whatever your environment is, do not get distracted or lose focus. Eventually, you have to make a mark on your own, and you cannot live off anyone's reflected glory-whether it's your parents or your siblings."

At the medical college, she got distinction in five subjects and topped the college in ENT and ophthalmology. In the third year of MBBS, while doing her gynaecology and obstetrics term, she met Dr Hrishikesh Pai, then a registrar in the gynaecology department, the love of her life, and they got married during her internship. Probably due to his influence, she got drawn towards obstetrics and gynaecology and started residency in KEM hospital, post-marriage.

In Wadia and KEM Hospital, Mumbai, she got inspired and learnt a lot under the guidance of some of the great teachers of the time. Residency life taught her to be tough and independent and prepared her to live in extremely difficult conditions. She says, "Hard work in a field, which one is passionate about, love and support from friends and family, a feeling of contributing positively to society are enough to keep you happy." In 1993, she started private practice in a polyclinic. She did a lot of humanitarian work and slowly started getting recognition. She also became an active member of the Mumbai Obstetrics and Gynaecological Society and stood for elections for the Managing Committee.

Leading Health Welfare Activities

Owing to her perseverance and great work, she always won all the elections like MOGS, FOGSI Vice President, IAGE, etc. Her life included many firsts. She became the first gynaecologist ever to become the President of all the major gynaecological organisations in the country like FOGSI – Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecological Societies of India, IAGE – Indian Association of Gynaecological Endoscopists, ISAR – Indian Society for Assisted Reproduction and MOGS – Mumbai Obstetrics and Gynaecological Society.

During the FOGSI Presidency, she travelled across the country, met people, organised and attended various academic events, liaisons, patient welfare and social activities, etc. The federation also made the first International Chapter of FOGSI – the London Chapter. For the first time, they had a huge India Day celebration at the Royal College, UK. For the first time, FOGSI invited all government health ministers and officials along with NGOs in the field of women and child health to a large meeting which was organized at Delhi.

FOGSI also introduced a large social programme, 'Nari Swastya Pahal,' where they reached out to more than 25,000 women with free health check-ups

across the country. FOGSI came into the Limca Book of Records for the maximum number of haemoglobin checks in a day. They also supported the Prime Minister's PMSMA programme with 1,500 volunteer doctors providing free ANC care on the 9th of every month. During her tenure they also launched grandly, the Manayata programme of FOGSI, to upgrade nursing homes all over the country. A promotional video was also made for FOGSI, so as to let everyone know what FOGSI was all about. She says, "Preparation, total, and absolute dedication to the organization which you work with, is the only way to reach your goals."

Rewards and Recognition

Among the numerous awards and recognitions, she received, included the Honorary Fellowship of The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, UK, the FROCG; The Women Empowerment Award from IMA; Awards for Excellence in Healthcare from Times of India and Midday; Glorious Legend of FOGSI award. Recently, as President of MOGS, she and her team received the COVID Essential Hero's award.

She says, "For a woman, there is a constant need to multi-task. The family and home are the most important, yet to achieve something professionally, one has to devote a lot of time and energy on the professional front as well." She has written many chapters in many medical books. She has several publications to her credit. She has organized thirty-three national conferences, and 250 workshops in the capacity of organizing chairperson/organizing secretary, and has conducted workshops for training gynaecologists in the country. She also holds the honor of delivering sixty-six orations at various conferences. She has been invited as a faculty to give lectures at 425 national and international conferences.

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