

*Biography*

# The visionary who transformed private health care in India

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**ABSTRACT**

Dr. Prathap Chandra Reddy is the Founder-Chairman of the Apollo Hospitals Group (AHG) and is considered a living legend and architect of modern private health care in India. In 1983, Dr. Reddy started the first professionally run private hospital – Apollo Hospitals in Madras (now Chennai). Since then, the AHG has expanded to over 73 hospitals across the country. The state-of-the-art facilities have made advanced health-care services accessible and affordable to all in need. AHG has a presence in primary care, secondary care, tertiary care, quarterly care, health IT, tele-health (tele-consults, tele-pathology, tele-cardiology, and tele-radiology), eICU pharmacy retailing, project consultancy, research, and academics. He catalyzed a “reverse brain drain” by inspiring hundreds of Non-Resident Indian Doctors to come back to India, by creating opportunities and providing them with a world class medical ecosystem. Dr. Reddy’s contributions are widely recognized by patients, doctors, the health-care fraternity across the world, the community at large, and by the Government of India.

**Keywords:** Health care, Prathap Chandra Reddy, Awards, Apollo Hospitals, Visionary, Legend, India

**INTRODUCTION**

At the age of 50, when most people would typically start planning for their retirement, Dr. Prathap Chandra Reddy [Figure 1] took a bold step to revolutionize the state of the health-care sector in the country. He founded the first hospital, which was professionally run, in Madras in 1983. He built Apollo Hospitals from scratch to provide state-of-the-art and high-end diagnostic and treatment services to the people of India and its neighboring countries.

He was committed to providing an international standard of health care to all with great compassion and at a fraction of the cost in comparison to the developed world. Dr. Reddy chose the name “Apollo” for his hospitals after the Greek God “Apollo” who was known as the God of heavenly light, illuminating a man’s soul and thus Apollo Hospitals aimed to provide similar yeoman service.

Dr. Reddy is a true visionary who transformed India’s health-care sector by making advanced medical accessible and affordable to the people of India. He has focused on quality, affordability, and accessibility which he called an “Iron Triangle.”<sup>[1]</sup> The Apollo Group’s revolutionary impact on health-care delivery has been so significant that the health-care services can now be demarcated into “before and after Apollo.” It is for this reason that; Dr. Reddy has been summed

up as the “*Sui Generis*” or the “Real Healer” in a league of his own.

**EARLY LIFE AND MEDICAL CAREER**

Dr. Prathap Chandra Reddy was born on February 5, 1933, in a small village in Aragonda, Madras Presidency, British India (present day Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, India). He is happily married to Sucharitha Reddy for the past 63 years and is blessed with four dynamic daughters.

After completing his undergraduate medical education in Madras at Stanley Medical College, India, he moved to the USA for higher medical education and training. He qualified as a cardiologist and was trained at the prestigious Harvard University and thereafter worked at the renowned Massachusetts General Hospital, USA. After practicing in the USA, he returned to Madras in 1971 and practiced as a Cardiologist at the HM hospital for nearly a decade. The idea and conviction of starting a world-class hospital came to his mind after he lost a 38-year-old young man who needed a cardiac surgery, but could not raise \$50,000 to go abroad for the treatment and sadly, passed away. Dr. Reddy pledged to provide an infrastructure that would offer the best of what is available globally, to the patients at an affordable cost and right at their doorsteps.

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He founded the first corporate hospital of India in Madras in 1983, named it the Apollo Hospital. Since then, he has transformed Indian health care and Apollo Hospitals Group (AHG) is now, Asia's trusted and foremost integrated health-care organization.<sup>[2]</sup>

## ACHIEVEMENTS

In recognition of his exemplary contribution in the development of health care in India, the Government of India awarded Dr. Reddy with prestigious awards, including the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> highest civilian awards, namely [Figure 2], the “Padma Vibhushan” in 2010 and the “Padma Bhushan” in 1991, and released a postal stamp of Apollo Hospitals in 2009.

India Today magazine has ranked him in the list of the top 50 most powerful people of India.<sup>[3]</sup> Dr. Reddy's journey of healing was certainly not easy, as he had to overcome a mountain of resistance and other teething troubles.

Dr. Reddy is also the recipient of several lifetime achievements like EY Entrepreneur of the Year (March 2021),<sup>[4]</sup> and many other distinguished awards. He was conferred with the highly prestigious “Lions Humanitarian Award” (2018) for his astounding humanitarian efforts. He thus became the fifth Indian and the second medical doctor to be conferred with this honor.<sup>[5]</sup>

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr. Reddy is best described as a compassionate humanitarian who dedicated his life to bringing world-class health care within the economic and geographic reach of million's. Dr. Reddy has created a successful healthcare delivery model, which many other health-care providers subsequently emulated in India. At the age of 88, he has the zeal to bring Indian health care to the level or even better the world's

best. AHG's mission is “To bring healthcare of international standards within reach of all. We are committed to achieving and maintaining excellence in education, research, and health care for the benefit of humanity”

## Reversing brain drain

Dr. Reddy persuaded and influenced hundreds of Indian doctors working abroad (Non-Resident Indians) to return to India and practice in his state-of-the-art hospitals, thus reversing the phenomenon of “brain drain.” In the 73 hospitals of the Apollo Group, there are around 5000 highly qualified and skilled senior doctors (consultants and senior consultants) in various medical and surgical specialties. He has also contributed significantly to retard the outflow of trained doctors, nurses, and other paramedical staff to other countries, by providing excellent working and job opportunities in his hospitals in India.

## Popularizing preventive healthcare

Dr. Reddy popularized the concept of “prevention is better than the treatment” and started the program of preventive health checks in Apollo Hospitals, which are very popular and much sought by individuals and corporate for their employees. Until now, more than 25 million preventive health checks have been undertaken at various Apollo Hospitals.<sup>[5]</sup> The latest offering is an AI driven Pro Health program.

## Creating several state-of-the-art hospitals

The institution that he envisioned and has built – Apollo Hospitals, has steered a revolution and marked the birth of private healthcare in India. AHG has a PAN India presence [Figure 3]. Since inception over 37 years ago, 73 state-of-the-art Apollo Hospitals have been established, making Apollo the

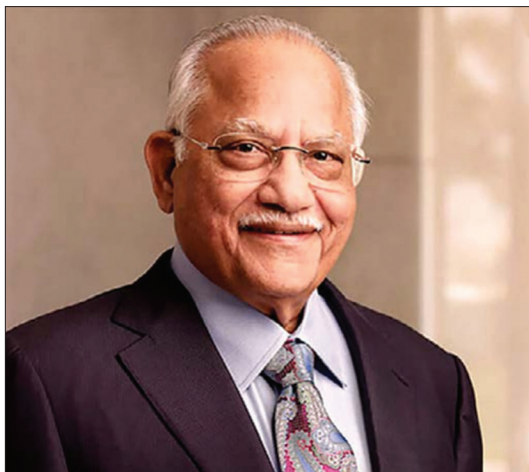


Figure 1: Dr. Prathap Chandra Reddy, a living legend.



Figure 2: Dr. Prathap Chandra Reddy receiving “Padma Vibhushan” award from the President of India.

largest chain of hospitals in India, with more than 10,000 beds, ≈4000 pharmacies, and 150 telemedicine centers.<sup>[6]</sup> There are also ≈150 primary care clinics set up by the Apollo Group. Eight Apollo Hospitals have Joint Commission International accreditation, and 31 hospitals have NABH accreditations. Apollo Hospitals are considered trendsetters for India's private health-care delivery system and are the reference point for peers in the Indian health-care industry. The hospitals have touched the lives of more than 150 million people so far across 140 countries.<sup>[7]</sup> Apollo's ambitious visions for the next phase of development are to "Touch a Billion Lives."

### Promoting research and education

Dr. Reddy has supported and encouraged medical research through the Apollo Hospital Educational Research Foundation, which recognizes the medical fraternity's research work annually by giving them citations and cash awards. Fourteen Apollo Hospitals are recognized centers for the Diplomate of National Board (DNB) of Examination for providing post-graduate training in 44 specialties and superspecialties. More than 900 postgraduate students are currently undergoing training DNB and FNB courses.<sup>[6]</sup>

Under the mentorship of Dr. Reddy, Apollo Hospitals runs a peer-reviewed quarterly journal by the name of "Apollo Medicine," which is being published regularly for the past 16 years and provides a valuable platform for healthcare professionals in the world to publish their research.<sup>[8]</sup>

### Bringing the latest technology and treatments

Dr. Reddy always believed in bringing in the best and the latest technology for diagnosis and treatment – be it the world's best CT and MRI scanners or Cancer and Radiotherapy equipment (Novalis TX, Cyberknife, Cyclotron, etc.). Dr. Reddy played a key role in campaigning

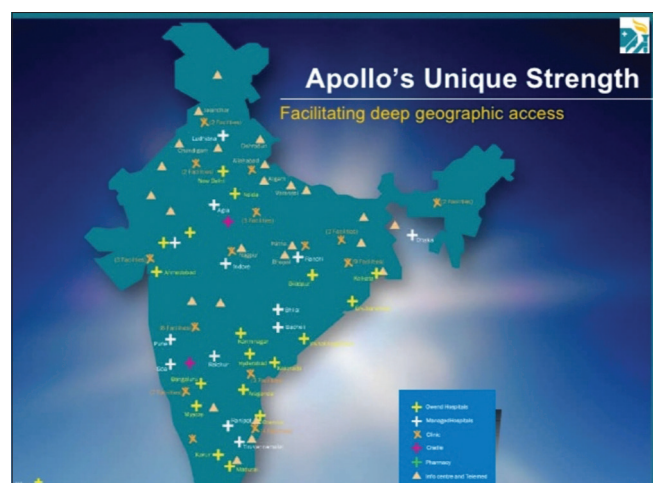


Figure 3: A PAN India presence of Apollo group of hospitals.

for a law to govern organ donation. He acted as a powerful advocate for the Transplant of Human Organs Act 1994 and the Transplantation of Human Organ Rules 1995 through numerous representations with parliamentarians and ministers.<sup>[1]</sup> The first multiorgan transplant in the country was performed at Apollo Hospitals, Madras, on December 25, 1995. In 2012, 544 kidney and 269 liver transplants were performed at Apollo Hospitals, Delhi, in a calendar year, making it the busiest standalone transplant center in the world.<sup>[1]</sup> Every year since 2013, the Apollo Transplant Program has performed more than 1200 solid organ transplants ever year. Even during the COVID pandemic, 823 transplants were performed (personal communication). Dr. Reddy established the first Proton Therapy Centre to cater to 3 billion people in Asia and Africa. Apollo's Centre of Excellence for Cardiac Sciences, Cancer, Neurosciences, Orthopedics, Emergency Care, and Robotic Surgery are at the forefront of advanced medicine.

### Popularizing medical tourism

Dr. Reddy popularized and introduced high-quality medical services to other South East Asian, African, and the Middle East countries. He is renowned as the champion of India's medical tourism, which has helped thousands of patients from different countries and also boosted the Indian economy. Apollo Hospitals are known to have treated patients from 140 countries at their facilities.<sup>[6]</sup>

### Leadership in Indian health care

Dr. Reddy has excellent leadership qualities and has contributed to Indian health care by being at the helm of several prestigious organizations and has created institutions such as Global Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, NATHEALTH.

### Contributions during COVID-19 pandemic

Under Dr. Reddy's leadership and guidance, the AHG developed a distinctive, comprehensive approach ("Project Kavach") encompassing all the vital aspects – information, assessment, testing, treatment, and isolation to fight the novel coronavirus.<sup>[9,10]</sup> In <1 year, Apollo touched millions of lives through this project by completing 18 million COVID risk assessment scans, performed over 500,000 tests, and successfully treated more than 100,000 patients across the nation (personal communication).

### PERSONALITY

Dr. Reddy is blessed with an outstanding ability to empathize with people, size up the situation, and provide amicable solutions to all. He is soft-spoken, polite, intelligent in gauging people, and is always positive in his approach. He always



carries himself with authority and in a charming attire.

He is a true visionary and an entrepreneur. He is innovative in finding and providing solutions to complex challenges. Although he is very successful, he stays very grounded with his accomplishments and does not rest on his laurels. He is constantly thinking of ways to improve services and do more, every day for the patient and community.

Dr. Reddy is a strict disciplinarian and is a “God-fearing” personality. He believes that God gives him power and energy to do so much work, and the faith in it helps to drive all the actions.<sup>1</sup> He believes in 3Ps: Purity, Persistence, and Patience. He demonstrated the importance of women empowerment in the business by appointing his four daughters [Figure 4], Preetha, Suneeta, Sangita, and Shobana who have excelled in senior leadership roles in AHG.<sup>[11]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Dr. Prathap Chandra Reddy is the Founder-Chairman of Apollo Hospitals and is acknowledged as the architect of modern private Indian health care. He is a true living legend of Indian health care, who transformed the sector through his vision, persistence, and innovative ideas. He brought affordable health care within the reach of every individual. He has many “firsts” to his credit. He brought the latest medical technology and inspired Non-Resident Indian doctors to return to India. He is also the pioneer in establishing medical tourism in India.

*“Not every legend is a myth; some are flesh and blood. Some legends walk among us, but they aren’t born; they’re built. Legends are made from iron and sweat, mind and muscle, blood and vision, and victory. Legends are champions, they grow, they win, they conquer. There’s a legend behind every legacy, there’s a blueprint behind every legend.” – Arnold Schwarzenegger.*



**Figure 4:** Dr. Prathap Chandra Reddy with his four daughters.

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## Declaration of patient consent

Patient’s consent not required as there are no patients in this study.

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## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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