

## Obituary



### **In memory of Dr. Palani Murugan Rangasamy, inspirational colleague, motivating mentor, and dear friend.**

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, 2020, Dr. Palani Murugan Rangasamy has passed away at the age of 43. We mourn the loss of a dear friend and colleague. He left behind his wife Preethi, and his two daughters Iniya and Inbaa. Palani was a well-accomplished and highly respected scientist, leading his group at *Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology* in Hyderabad, India.

Palani started his journey in science at the *Institute of Genetics*, in the *Department of Biology* at the *University of Cologne*, as part of a state-funded PhD program (*NRW International Graduate School Genes and functional Genomics, IGSGfG*). He joined the Dohmen group in 2001 to pursue his PhD, where he further continued as a post-doctoral researcher until 2013. During this period, he evolved as an independent, ambitious scientist focused on understanding the basic molecular mechanisms of protein homeostasis.

Driven by his enormous curiosity and motivation, his contribution to science included the discovery of novel layers of regulation of ornithine decarboxylase antizyme (Oaz1), a central regulator of polyamine biosynthesis (EMBO J. 2004). His remarkable work earned him a prize first prize poster award for presenting Best Scientific Work at the Harden/EMBO Conference on “The Ubiquitin Proteasome System in health and disease” in Cirencester, UK, the Best Paper Award of the *IGSGfG*, and a PhD degree with *Summa cum laude* in 2004. Because his findings had opened up so many new research directions, he decided to continue this work as a postdoctoral researcher. Sharing his knowledge and experience with a number of undergraduate and graduate students, he led a team effort of several PhD students that enabled additional landmark discoveries. He was a motivating and patient mentor who instilled the seed of curiosity in many of his contemporaries and trainees. For many, he was a pillar of support both professionally and personally. Continuing on his earlier findings, along with other lab members, he discovered a so far unknown mechanism of gene regulation, the nascent Oaz1 protein emerging from the ribosome acts as a polyamine sensor that controls the efficiency of translation of its own mRNA within a polyribosome (Nature 2011). For this work, Palani received the best paper award of the *Graduate School for Biological Sciences (GSfBS)* of the University of Cologne. He was instrumental in the success of many of his colleagues leading to multiple discoveries and key publications (e.g. Gödderz *et al.* J. Mol. Biol., 2011, Beenukumar *et al.*, Microbial Cell 2015). As a testimony for his deep-rooted connection to the *Institute for Genetics* and the *University of Cologne*, in 2015, he returned to Cologne supported by a reunion grant of the *University of Cologne* to promote our ongoing collaboration.

The latest discoveries from his own group included an unexpected role of components of the Ccr4-Not complex, thus far mainly known for their role in controlling mRNA translation, in the degradation of ubiquitylated proteins (Kandasamy *et al.* BioRxiv 2020a,b). All these important discoveries have opened up many promising new research directions and challenges for ongoing and future studies, for which Palani’s vision, intuition, and dedication

will be missed. He had so many ideas and research directions to follow in his still young career as a scientist.

For his colleagues, Palani was at the same time a great mentor, collaborator, and friend. He was a caring, fine guy with a good sense of humor, equipped with a very open, modest, and unselfish character. Palani was always a great person to discuss experiments and science with. Colleagues and friends remember him as the cheerful, motivating face of science that he was during his tenure in Cologne. Palani was very knowledgeable, a guy to go to as a kind of walking encyclopedia of science, who would always go out of his way to answer questions and to help his colleagues. If there was something to do or organize in the laboratory or the graduate school, he was the one who offered help. He was both grateful and generous. Palani will be sorely missed by his family, friends, and colleagues. He will stay in our hearts and always will be remembered for his kindness, inspiration, and friendship he gave to us.

Palani, we miss you, but we will do our best to keep the light you kindled shine bright.

Jürgen Dohmen, Leo Kurian, Isabell Witt  
on behalf of colleagues and friends in Cologne and beyond