

## In Memoriam: Sanjiv Sam Gambhir, MD, PhD, 1962 - 2020

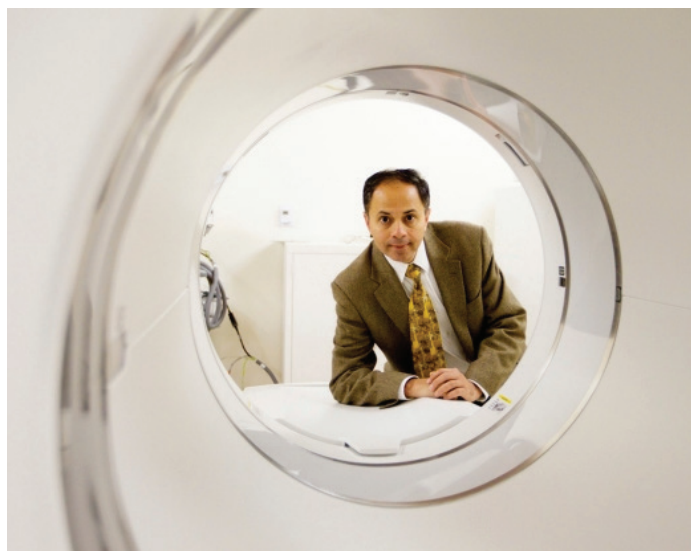
The Nuclear Medicine community lost one of the pioneers in molecular imaging with the death of Sam Gambhir at the age of 57 due to cancer. Sam was dedicated to the development of precision health and early detection of cancer. He received the Dean's Medal, one of Stanford's highest honors, shortly before he died. Click on the link to see a very moving tribute video and hear Sam speaking about his vision of the future of health care.

<https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2020/07/sanjiv-sam-gambhir-pioneer-in-molecular-imaging-dies.html>

Sam came to Stanford in 2003 as the Head of Nuclear Medicine, as well as Director of the Molecular Imaging Program at Stanford (MIPS), Director of the Precision Health and Integrated Diagnostics (PHIND) Center, Division Chief of the Canary Center for Cancer Early Detection, and Member of the Bio-X Program. He became the Virginia and D.K. Ludwig Professor for Clinical Investigation in Cancer Research in 2009. He became the Chair of Radiology in August 2011.

Those of us who worked with Sam knew how special he was. He was not only brilliant, he was also a visionary. I wasn't sure what to think when I first heard Sam speak about continuous health monitoring technologies like smart toilets that could monitor changes in our chemistry. It sounded like science fiction, but Sam had a relentless dedication to thinking collaboratively and outside the box. He brought together researchers from different fields to work together to advance medical imaging. He talked about injecting "molecular spies" that could look for molecular errors and send signals that we could image with molecular tools. He was a pioneer in reporter PET imaging strategies. He was always thinking ahead, way ahead.

He was very supportive of everyone in the department, and empowered individuals. He had a genuine love and respect for colleagues. He went to great lengths to provide assistance in times of personal need, including being at your bedside if you were hospitalized. He was universally loved and admired for his hard work and dedication. Our feelings for Sam grew even stronger when Sam and Aruna's only child, their son Milan, developed brain cancer when he was 14 years old. Milan died 21 months later on May 2, 2015. He was only 16 years old. Sam worked throughout this period



of intense personal grief. Although he was open about his grief, we could only imagine what it was like for him and Aruna. To see him carry-on was both heartbreaking and inspiring. When Milan died there was a memorial service in Stanford's Memorial Church. The 1200 seat sanctuary was nearly full. It was our turn to show Sam and Aruna our love and respect.

We were like his family. For his students he was a caring father figure who inspired them to be the best they could be. He likened students to candles, and taught us that it was our responsibility to light those candles. Sam's last public gathering was the annual department holiday party on December 9, 2019. Although it was a festive occasion, we knew that Sam and Aruna had painful memories, and were facing an uncertain future. So when Sam told us that nothing is more important than our patients, and that we were here to relieve suffering and help people, we understood he was speaking from a deep and private place. He showed us that tragedy could only be endured with purpose. Those words echo even more loudly now.

Life moves on, and memories of Sam both sadden and console us. We try to live up to his ideals and honor his memory. The world has lost a great scientist and physician. We have also lost our friend and leader.

George Segall, MD