

## Obituary

### As is a Tale, so is Life: Not How Long it is, But How Good it is, is What Matters Seneca; A Tribute to Dr Faisal Masud

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January 1990, I was a newly minted house officer in North Medical Ward. I had a new case to present to Dr Faisal Masud, for which I had practiced hard to prepare. Nervously, I started and finished my history in breathtaking speed and looked up, standing diagonal to me Dr Faisal was listening intently. He raised his head and gently nudged me and said, "Puttar, your chief complaint is never complete without pertinent negatives." This simple, but profound lesson of skillful history taking being the bedrock of a good clinician, lasted me a lifetime.

Over a span of thirty years, I got to know Dr Faisal in many roles, as a phenomenal teacher, a master clinician, an extraordinary leader, a great human being and most of all a friend. I first met Faisal Saab (as we affectionately referred to him) in 1988, when he delivered a lecture on DKA at Patiala block in his signature concoction of English, Urdu and Punjabi. A wiry man with salt and pepper hair, who left us speechless with his command of subject and captivating teaching style, and thus started a journey of lifetime of respect and adulation for me.

Faisal Sb was a gifted diagnostician, not by accident—he arrived at his diagnosis like an artist, a meticulous history and an art worthy physical exam. The fact that he diagnosed a drug reaction based on history during PIC incident of 2011 is the best testimony to his diagnostic skills. One of his gifts was reading body language, he often knew what was on patient's mind before he/she uttered a single word. He always treated his patients kindly, his first words were of reassurance, "Baba jee tuse changay ho jayo gay." Like Hippocrates, he never forgot to comfort his patients.

In 2014, as president of North American Alumni, I asked him what we could do for KEMU, and his

answer was simple: "The job of a university is to produce original knowledge. I need your help to develop original research at KEMU." He firmly believed that the biggest asset of a country was not oil or gold, but it's knowledge. One of his brilliant former students, Dr Rehan Qayyum volunteered and successfully taught a faculty research mentorship program for faculty, which led to international research publications from KEMU faculty. Research publications from KEMU always made his day. Following year, when we met him, he greeted us with a smile! I earned enough respect after this, that every December, he would bestow the gift of one lunch with him at Café Ayanto,

Dr Faisal firmly believed that a strong faculty was a strong asset for KEMU. He took a personal interest in hiring and developing young faculty. A connoisseur of literature, poetry, philosophy, art, opera and music, he wanted to inculcate flair in his faculty members. He often discussed books, movies and music during young faculty seminars. He was a lifelong learner, who even took Punjabi lessons formally from a Punjabi professor to better communicate with his patients. An almost trained chef, it was amusing to watch him give instructions to his chef from his VC desk on how to bake a fruit cake or whip up a café late.

Faisal Sb had a keen eye for architecture and touring Patiala Block through his eyes was a special treat. I had no idea that library hall dimensions were that of Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man or the King Edward's seal displayed in Patiala Block was one of only three seals in the world.

He would proudly show the stunningly renovated library hall. Each and every doorknob, window fixture, light shade was painstakingly reproduced. The library hall had never looked better. He brought it

back to the glory which I had never witnessed before. Each and every slab of marble in library hall bears a testimony to his quest for perfection, he would stop construction till the exact grain of Ziarat marble arrived to ensure continuity. We all owe him profound gratitude for preserving and renovating historic KEMU buildings for us and generations.

One only has to visit Diabetes Metabolic Center (DMC) at Services Institute of Medical Sciences to get acquainted with his vision of what a public health facility can look like. A comprehensive diabetic center, first of its kind in public center established with his family's donation where all services are provided under one roof. From the electronic medical records (a software he created), token system, diabetic educators and dieticians to Bariatric weighing scales, no details were spared! Acclaim or naming the building in his name was never the point of service for him, the building was only dedicated to him posthumously.

Dr Faisal was an original. A man of character and integrity who lived an extraordinary life.

With his snowy mane and brisk stride, he had a presence and charisma that demanded attention. Perhaps it came from who was inside, pure as the driven snow. He achieved in 65 years, what most of us

couldn't do in 165 years. He taught scores of students, trained young physicians, created and led institutions, mentored faculty, led Dengue Expert Advisory Group and campaign with phenomenal success, advised government officials on preventive health, health education, policy matters and much more. He never cut corners; he lived a life where the end did not justify means. He set an example with his life, where he made you want to be a better person. He was a patriotic citizen that gave back to his country, fully and freely without any expectations.

Dr Faisal has left a huge void in our lives. He has taught us the meaning of true service, to his students, family, friends, patients and most of all his country. He lives on in all of us whose lives he so profoundly touched. Like his beloved art of Opera, where the protagonist usually dies at the end, but the values he/she exalts like integrity, honesty, compassion and love live on, the values he upheld will live on. We felt his presence and will continue to do so as long as we live. And isn't that the whole point of our time on earth? What an example he set for us.

The writer Dr Ayesha Najib is a practicing pediatrician in Phoenix, Arizona and is a former student and house officer of Dr Faisal Masud.