

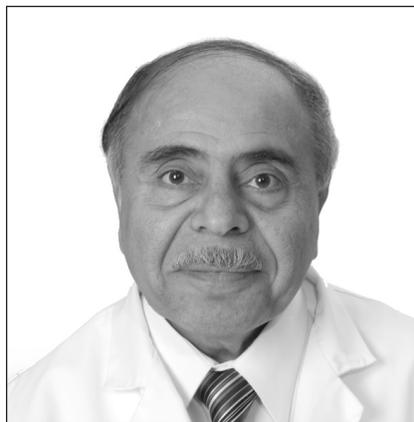
Muhammad Asim Khan, MD: A Half Century of Service and Inspiration

It is a special pleasure for me to write about Professor Muhammad Asim Khan, a very dear colleague who inspires everyone with whom he comes into contact. He received his medical degree in 1965 from King Edward Medical College (KEMC) in Lahore, Pakistan, and in 1967, after serving in the Army Medical Corps, began his postgraduate medical training in England. Two years later, he continued training in the United States with a fellowship in rheumatology in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1973, he joined Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland, where he is a tenured professor of medicine.

His research interests focus on clinical, genetic, and therapeutic aspects of rheumatic diseases, primarily ankylosing spondylitis (AS) and related spondyloarthropathies (SpA). He has suffered from severe AS for 54 years and has written two books about the disease. He has edited 13 yearly reviews and monographs and a journal supplement. He has authored 210 scientific articles, 45 book chapters, and 125 scientific abstracts. He serves as a section editor of *Current Rheumatology Reports*.

The American College of Physicians (ACP), the second largest group of physicians in the United States with 129,000 internists in 2003 awarded Professor Khan the Mastership of the American College of Physicians (MACP), its highest category of membership. Other awards he has received include Mastership in the American College of Rheumatology (MACR) in 2009, the Distinguished Rheumatologist Award in 2000, the Distinguished Alumnus Award of Academic Excellence from the KEMC Alumni Association of North America (KEM-CAANA) in 1998, and fellow of the Royal College of Physicians (FRCP), London, United Kingdom, in 1988.

Professor Khan has served the Spondylitis Association of America (SAA) for many years and was given the Lifetime of Dedication and Devotion to People with Spondylitis' Award in 1998. In 2005, he was the first recipient of the Greg Field Award, which is given to individuals with AS who have persevered and gone on to be of service to others. He was a



Dr. Muhammad Asim Khan

member of the National Advisory Board for the National Institute of Health's (NIH's) Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Disorders (NIAMS) from 1992 to 1995. He is one of the founding members of ASAS (Assessment in

SpA International Society), SPARTAN (SpA Research and Treatment Network), and GRAPPA (Group for Research and Assessment of Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis).

Clearly, he has excelled in his chosen speciality and has contributed significantly to the knowledge of medicine in general and rheumatology in particular. This becomes even more evident in the following brief autobiography Professor Khan prepared at JIMA's request.

"I entered medical school 50 years ago when King Edward Medical College was celebrating its 100th anniversary. For four years, I was suffering from severe AS, which had not been diagnosed. It took another two years for my disease to be identified (when I started learning clinical medicine and came to know a professor of medicine who quickly recognized my disease when I told him about my symptoms). Phenylbutazone (Butazolidine), one of the early nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, enabled me to continue my education. During the preceding six years, I received many wrong and ineffective treatments, including a year of taking streptomycin, which I self-injected, along with isoniazid and para-aminosalicylic (INH and PAS), for a presumed diagnosis of tuberculosis. When this treatment did not alleviate my symptoms, I received intravenous infusions of honey (imported from West Germany), which also proved to be of no benefit. I think it took

away the bitterness I may have had because of ineffective treatments and the lack of diagnosis in addition to making me ever so sweet. On top of these treatments, I underwent so many radiographs of my pelvis and back that I must have “glowed in dark” (I later developed kidney cancer).

After my graduation from KEMC in 1965, and without revealing my illness, I voluntarily joined the Pakistan Army Medical Corps in my zeal to serve my country in its hour of need when it was attacked. Sadly, I was the only graduate who voluntarily joined the Army at that time, even though I was not as physically fit as my fellow graduates. In 1969, a few months after my arrival in the United States, I received papers for enlistment in the U.S. Army Medical Corps for service in Vietnam. I dutifully filed the papers, and the recruiting officer who read my documents exempted me from Army service. In my curiosity (because those papers did not have any questions pertaining to my physical fitness) I asked for the reason. The officer replied that I was exempt because of my service in the Pakistan Army because there was a reciprocity agreement between the two countries (At that time, Pakistan, was a member of the Central Treaty Organization [CENTO] and Southeast Asia Treaty Organization [SEATO]). When I told him that I expected the reward for my service in the hereafter for that service to the nation that not only accepted me as a 3-year-old refugee but also gave me an almost free medical education, the officer gleefully replied, “Young man I give you reward in this world as well.”

Al-Hamdo-Lillah I am lucky that 50 years have passed since I entered medical school. The time is chronicled by surmounting many hurdles, including

hip arthroplasties, coronary angioplasties, neck fracture, and cancer. Life for me is like a glass half-full, not half-empty. I am still working fulltime and pursuing my clinical and academic interests, even though I have absolutely no mobility in my spine (including the neck), no expansion of my chest, and I am walking “on six legs” (using a walker with four wheels). One of my mottos in life is the famous Persian saying: “kasb-e-kamaal kun keh aziz-e-jehan shavi” (Achieve excellence in your work to become a respected friend of the world).

I have recently celebrated the 150th anniversary of my beloved alma mater in my beloved city.

Those of us who have been fortunate to meet with, interact with, and hear Professor Khan speak or lecture always come away with a sense of awe, wondering how a person with such severe physical disabilities can have such an optimistic, cheerful, and positive outlook in life (Maybe the intravenous honey did have an impact). The IMANA family salutes him for his courage, faith and perseverance, and JIMA is delighted to profile him as one of its high-profile life members.

Profile submitted by

**Faroque Ahmed Khan, MB, MACP
Associate Editor, JIMA
Master, American College of Physicians
Consultant, King Fahad Medical City
Chair, of Institutional Review Board
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Professor of Medicine
SUNY, Stony Brook
Stony Brook, New York**