

Message from the Editor

Assalaamu alaykum

Dear IMANA Members and JIMA Readers:

I am pleased to present in this issue a variety of interesting articles. Some are from authors in the United States, and others are from overseas. To me this is important. It allows exchange of information about the health conditions in our home countries and serves as a bridge between us and the Muslim physicians in the predominantly Muslim countries.

Dr. Masoodi's article entitled "Along the Banks of Lake Wular" describes the health conditions of rural Kashmir and how a young, dedicated physician can make a difference. Instead of complaining about his dispatch to a small village, he made the best of his time initiating useful programs to improve community health. This should serve as an example for young, recently graduating physicians in our home countries who are usually sent to rural health clinics for their first year of training.

Another article describes the great effort by the Federation of Islamic Medical Associations (FIMA), of which IMANA is a constituent organization, to improve and save the vision of thousands of individuals in underdeveloped countries. This is a project of which we should be proud. The "Save Vision" program actually got the recognition of the American College of Physicians (ACP) and will receive its prestigious Rosenthal Award in its clinical convention later this month in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Haq et al contributed an informative article about the incidence and risk reduction of breast cancer with special reference to Muslim countries. It is well known that breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related mortality in women in the Muslim world. While the incidence varies in different Muslim countries, there is evidence that it is increasing. The authors present evidence that the major risk factors are lifestyle choices that can be modified with a potential for significant reduction of breast cancer incidence. They advocate a joint effort by physicians, government institutions, and the community to address these risk factors and develop early detection strategies as well as specific medical interventions in high-risk women that will result in a decrease in the incidence and mortality of breast cancer.

The topic of pain management associated with

terminal illness is gaining most deserved attention. Dr. K. Rehman describes a proposal for establishment of a facility to provide specific education and training in pain control and symptom management for health care providers. He suggested that this be established in the recently conceived project known as the Madina Knowledge Economic City in al-Madina al-Munawwara, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He presented his proposal at the Noor Conference held there in June 2008, and it is published in this issue.

At the same conference, Dr. S. Rehman presented the need for a similar center for autism. She describes autism as a rapidly increasing epidemic. Individuals with autism rarely receive adequate care. The medical community has largely neglected this disease. There is a lot of controversy about its etiology and the reasons behind its seemingly significantly increasing prevalence. Also there is a lack of established protocols of management. Dr. Rehman advocates national programs to conduct research, standardized treatments, and offer professional and public education.

Dr. Nagamia contributed another installment in the series "Pioneers of Islamic Medicine." This installment deals with the Bukhtishū` family, which produced several prominent physicians from the 2nd to the 5th Hijri century. Successive generations of this family contributed greatly in the collection, translation and transmission of medical texts. They headed newly formed hospitals and dispensaries, taught medical students and practiced, frequently as court physicians. Being of the Christian faith did not diminish their ability to contribute and achieve their deserved high status. This is another example of the unique characteristics of the golden age of Islamic civilization.

Along same lines is the book chosen by Dr. Faroque Khan to review, "Lost History: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Scientists, Thinkers and Artists." It addresses this golden age of Islamic civilization, mentions some of the specific contributions of scientists and physicians in the early Islamic period. One chapter in the book highlights the qualities of Muslim leadership, which championed the ethos of social fairness and justice, advanced public health, tolerance and diversity in faith and ethnicity.

In this issue, Dr. Faroque Khan profiles a great contemporary Islamic scholar, Dr. Omar Hasan Kasule. Dr. Kasule has a brilliant career. His main contribution has been including the Islamic perspective in medical curricula of several medical schools in the Islamic World. He was part of several distinguished institutions including Harvard University, the Islamic University in Malaysia, and the University of Brunei. He is a consultant for many hospitals and faculties of medicine in southeast Asia on the topic of Islamic medicine and the integration of Islamic ethics in medical practice.

He is presently using his experience in the medical field to transform other university disciplines as director of the Islamic epistemology and curricula reforms project.

The JIMA editorial board, with the approval of the executive council of IMANA, has decided to transform JIMA into an online, open access journal. This will allow much wider access to published material, which so far has been limited to IMANA members. The general public will be able to find JIMA articles through Internet search engines such as Google.

I hope this will encourage more members to submit their work to JIMA as it now will enjoy wider exposure and can be cited in other authors' articles. We definitely need more original articles, especially in the areas of Islamic medical ethics, history of medicine as well as the usual clinical articles of reviews, case reports, etc.

Finally, I hope to see many of you in the annual conference in Washington, DC, July 3-4. I hope to hear your presentations and ask that you submit your manuscripts as soon as possible to JIMA so we can start the new online journal.

Wassalaam,

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