

Profile

Dr. Shagufta Yasmeen: an Example of Faith in Action

Dr. Shagufta Yasmeen, MB, MRCOG, a graduate of the Government Medical College in Srinagar, Kashmir, is an associate professor of internal medicine and obstetrics and gynecology at University of California (UC), Davis.

Like many international medical graduates, Dr. Yasmeen came to UC Davis via a long and winding road that began at the University of Kashmir in Srinagar, Kashmir, where she earned a medical degree in 1989. She continued to work in London in the early 1990s and attained membership — not easy for a foreigner — in the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. She moved across the Atlantic to begin an internship at the Thomas Jefferson Medical University in Philadelphia in 1994. She then completed residency training at UC Davis, where she has been on the faculty since the late 1990s.

I had the pleasure of visiting UC Davis and saw firsthand the remarkable accomplishments of Dr. Yasmeen. She is on the faculty in the departments of medicine and OB/GYN and she put these twin skills to great use in establishing the Shifa Clinic at the Sacramento mosque. This clinic has developed into a model for providing care and at the same time reaching out to members of all faiths.

As director and founder of the Shifa Clinic (<http://www.shifaclinic.org>), one of five, free, student-run clinics (<http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/medschool/clinics/>) in the UC Davis Health System, she works with UC Davis medical students and faculty and community physician volunteers to provide much-needed healthcare services to uninsured patients in Sacramento. The clinic specializes in serving Middle Eastern and East Indian communities and provides interpretation in Punjabi, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, and Hindi, the last two of which Dr. Yasmeen speaks, along with Kashmiri and English. I had the

pleasure of visiting the Shifa Clinic. Dr. Joseph DeSilva, the dean of UC Davis, had only praise for this clinic and told me that the Shifa Clinic was one of the best run programs at UC Davis. These efforts were recognized nationally when Dr. Yasmeen was honored with the 2007 American Medical Association Foundation Leadership Award. The Leadership Awards (<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/367/2007leadership-award.pdf>) are presented annually to medical students, residents/fellows, young physicians, and international medical graduate physicians who have exhibited outstanding leadership in organized medicine and/or community affairs. The awards provide leadership development training for these “emerging leaders” to further strengthen their efforts toward advancing healthcare in America.

Establishing a medical clinic on the premises of a mosque represented lots of challenges. Some members of the mosque were not comfortable in having students and staff of all faiths in their midst in the mosque. Dr. Yasmeen overcame these objections with quiet determination and sound arguments based on the teachings of Islam. After convincing the mosque leadership about the importance and significance of having a clinic on premises, she convinced the medical school leadership and obtained an agreement allowing the medical school to send volunteer medical students and faculty to run the clinic, which is



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located within the premises of the Sacramento mosque.

The Shifa Clinic provides strong training for medical students and UC Davis undergraduate volunteers interested in careers in medicine. Dr. Yasmeen routinely provides one-on-one care to the clinic's patients. She also is the principal investigator on several grants awarded to the clinic. The grant funding has enabled the clinic to implement broader preventive care programs and stronger diabetic nutrition education programs, and to develop more culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate materials.

In 2003, as a result of her teaching, Dr. Yasmeen received the American College of Professors of Obstetrics and Gynecology (APGO) Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society Award in 2006.

In 2004, Dr. Yasmeen enrolled in the School of Medicine NIH K30/Mentored Clinical Research Training Program, which was developed to provide junior faculty and subspecialty trainees with the didactic training, mentored research, and peer-supported environment needed to launch an innovative clinical and translational research programs. She completed the course work for this program in May 2006.

This training from the K30 program equipped Dr. Yasmeen with the foundational concepts of clinical epidemiology, allowing her to undertake an independent research program on the role of screening for breast cancer in elderly women. Dr. Yasmeen was selected as a recipient of the Cancer Prevention, Control, Behavioral and Population Sciences Career Development Award — better known as a KO7 career award — from the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute.

The five-year, \$600,000 grant will enable Dr. Yasmeen to undertake a research project entitled

“Comorbidities and Breast Cancer among Elderly Women in the State of California.” In essence, the study will evaluate breast cancer screening — or the lack of it — in older women to help answer a much-debated question: When should screening continue and when should it stop?

And what does Dr. Yasmeen get out of this volunteer experience? To hear her tell it, pure bliss. “At the end of the day seeing patients, it gives me a lot of joy,” she said. “It has made me a different person. I just thank God I was able to help people.”

Dr. Yasmeen has been an active participant in IMANA. During the annual convention IMANA held in San Francisco in 2005, Dr. Yasmeen and her colleagues from the Shifa and the UC Davis School of Medicine were present in full force.

We at JIMA are delighted to profile Dr. Shagufta Yasmeen, a young, energetic physician who through her actions has developed a great reputation within her circles at UC Davis and now has been recognized by the American Medical Association, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Cancer Institute.

In the present post-September 11 atmosphere, Dr. Yasmeen has done a great job in winning the hearts and minds of many and presented a real face of Islam and Muslims and set an example for all of us. She is a true example of “Faith in Action.”

Profile submitted by

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