

A Tribute to Dr Faisal Masud:

Ayesha Najib

MD FAAP, USA

**“As is a Tale, so is Life: Not How Long it is, but how good it is, is what Matters”
Seneca**

It was a cold January morning in 1990, dressed in a bright new white coat I was a newly minted house officer in North Medical Ward. It was the second day of my work life, I had a new case to present. I started nervously gaze down, narrated my patient's history in breathtaking speed and looked up tentatively, standing diagonal to me listening intently was a lean man with piercing eyes. He looked at me and gave me a gentle nudge, “Putter, your history is never complete without pertinent negatives,” and this simple but profound lesson lasted me a lifetime.

He was a gifted diagnostician, not by accident- he arrived at his diagnosis with a meticulous history and a physical exam worthy of art. The fact that he diagnosed a drug reaction based on history during Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC) incident of 2011 is the best testimony to his diagnostic skills. One of his many gifts was reading body language, he often knew what was on a patient's mind before he/she uttered a single word was. He always started with reassurance, “Baba jee tuse changay ho jayo gay.” Like Hippocrates, he never forgot to comfort his patients.

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 Diabetic Ketoacidosis (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 life time of respect and adulation for me.

In 2014, as president of KEMCAANA, I asked him what we could do for KEMU, and his answer was: “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 its riches, oil or gold, but original knowledge. One of his brilliant former students, Dr Rehan Qayyum volunteered and successful taught a faculty research mentorship

program for faculty, which led to international research publications from KEMU faculty. Following year, when we met him, he smiled. Research publications from KEMU always made him happy. I earned enough respect that every December, he would give me the honor of having lunch with him at Café Ayanto,

Dr Faisal firmly believed that a strong faculty was the biggest asset of 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 communicate better with his patients. An almost le cordon bleu 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, he proudly showed us the stunning renovated library hall. Each and every door knob, window fixture, light shade had been painstakingly reproduced. It 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 eye, he would stop construction till the exact grain of Ziarat marble arrived to ensure continuity.

One only has to visit Diabetes Metabolic Center (DMC) at Services Institute of Medical Sciences to get acquainted with his vision posthumously. 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!

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

With his piercing gaze, and snowy mane, he had a presence and charisma that demanded attention. Perhaps it came from who he 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 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. Acclaim was never the point of service

for him.

Dr Faisal has left a huge void in our lives. He has taught us the meaning of true service, to his family, friends, patients and most of all his country. He lives on all of us whose lives he so profoundly touched. 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.

I did not want to write this. Perhaps, I did not want to acknowledge the finality of this moment that he is truly gone. Gone but not forgotten, for he touched countless lives, left this world a much better place than he found it. He was never afraid of death, he didn't want to linger and even in death he got what he wanted. He departed on his own terms, suddenly one day when we least expected it, left us wishing even in death that we could leave like him.