



Maj. Gen. Prof. Muhammad Aslam, HI(M) (Retd)
MBBS, M.Phil., Ph.D., FPAMS, FCPS

- Former Principal, Army Medical College, Rawalpindi
- Former Dean Health Sciences, National University of Science & Technology, Islamabad
- Founder Vice Chancellor, Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University, Islamabad
- Former Vice Chancellor, University of Health Sciences, Lahore
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Progress and development in the field of medical journalism in Pakistan has been rather slow due to various reasons. Medical Journalism has now developed into a specialty of its own with numerous sub-specialties in the developed world. It is a combination of art and science. Prof. Maj Gen Prof. Muhammad Aslam is one of the two eminent medical personalities who have contributed a great deal to its development in Pakistan. The other being Prof. M. Arshad Javed former Dean of Postgraduate Medical Institute/Lady Reading Hospital who recently retired as Vice Chancellor of Khyber Medical University, Peshawar. More recently Prof. Javed Akram Vice Chancellor, University of Health Sciences, Lahore has also played a vital role in its development.

I knew that Lt Col Aslam was Editor of Pakistan Armed Forces Medical Journal and once I had a chance meeting with him during his visit to Karachi at CPSP where he had come to take classes of post-graduation for FCPS students. I was immensely impressed with his humility, affectionate attitude and we became instant friends. The rest is history. He was always keen to promote the art of scientific writing and once he organized a daylong seminar on scientific writing at Army Medical College when Maj Gen Shujaat Hussain was Principal. Later, he himself was appointed as Principal, Army Medical College and took many important steps to promote research culture, scientific writing and publishing.

Once during his visit to Karachi we met at CPSP when he said that I have a year left to retire, hence, I wish to do something which should be memorable and asked me for some suggestions. After discussion, I suggested that let us organize an international conference on medical journalism

as no such meeting has ever been held in Pakistan. I further suggested that if he could arrange funding, I will invite some distinguished medical editors from overseas as faculty. We decided to continue further discussions on the topic after doing some homework. Eventually we agreed on this proposal and started working on the project. We were in constant touch with each other whenever he will visit Karachi, we will meet here and when I was visiting Islamabad we used to meet again and discuss the progress made so far. Since we had decided to hold the conference at Army Medical College, Rawalpindi I visited the venue as well. The auditorium was too big for the conference and the lecture halls were not air conditioned. Since the proposed dates for the conference were in April 2003, it was agreed that arrangements will be made to refurbish one of the lecture halls, have new audiovisual arrangements and air-conditioning and all this needed funding. Gen. Aslam assured that everything will be done well before the conference and he did manage to do that. He approached National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) which promised to provide some funding for this academic activity.

Next month I myself and late Dr. Maqbool H. Jafary visited Islamabad to attend the National Bioethics Committee meeting and we again met Gen Aslam to review the progress of the proposed conference. General Sahib was told that we need to fix some targets to complete the arrangements to ensure that everything was going as per schedule. I remember General Aslam remarked that “Your discipline seems to be even stronger than the Army”. Eventually we agreed to work on a time frame and make sure that our objective was achieved in time. Gen Aslam got promise for some grant from NUST and we started sending invitations to the speakers from overseas who were assured that their travel, boarding and lodging will be looked after by the conference. Seven distinguished medical editors from overseas accepted our invitation. They included four from Iran, one from Saudi Arabia, one from United Arab Emirates while Jane Nicholson from WHO EMRO also graced the occasion with her presence.

This became the first ever conference on Medical Editing held in Pakistan from April 23-25, 2007. It was attended by over two hundred fifty participants from all over the country. Chairman Higher Education Commission, Pakistan Prof. Atta ur Rehman was the Chief Guest in the inaugural session while Surgeon General, Pakistan Army, Lt Gen Mushtaq Ahmad Baig (Shaheed) was the Chief Guest in the concluding session. Prof. Zafarullah Ch., President CPSP, graced the conference dinner as Chief Guest. Proceedings of the conference were published in a book form and documented.¹ This conference was a great success and it also convinced WHO EMRO and our friends overseas that we are capable of organizing an international conference which proved extremely helpful in the later years.

After retirement when Gen. Aslam joined Shifa College of Medicine Islamabad, he hosted hands on workshop on Medical Writing and Peer Review. Later when we decided to host the EMMJ5 Medical Journals Conference at CPSP Karachi in 2010, his contacts in the Interior as well as Ministry of Foreign Affairs were extremely helpful to process the visa of our foreign delegates. It was few weeks before the EMMJ5 that we decided to establish Pakistan Association of Medical Editors (PAME) by renaming the Pakistan Medical Journalists Association. PAME was registered and Gen Aslam was elected as its founder President. EMMJ5 was organized in collaboration with WHO EMRO and attracted thirty four foreign delegates from eighteen countries and its proceedings were also published in a book form.² This conference was also held under his leadership.

When Gen Aslam joined University of Health Sciences (UHS) Lahore as its Vice Chancellor, he became a hub of academic activities. PAME in collaboration with UHS organized a number of hands on workshops on Medical Writing, Peer Review and medical journal publishing. It was his generosity, help, assistance and guidance that PAME was also able to hold its two national conferences at UHS. Gen Aslam as Vice Chancellor not only extended all help and assistance but also facilitated the faculty and postgraduate trainees at UHS to participate in the conference by providing 50% of their registration fee by the university.

He again played a vital role when we the members of PAME discussed the possibility of starting a training course for editors in Pakistan during the EMMJ6 Medical Journals conference held at Shiraz in 2015. This project eventually got materialized though a bit late while he had retired from UHS wherein Prof. Javed Akram the current VC UHS also played an important role. First batch of this Certificate in Medical Editing qualified in July 2020 and the second batch also got inducted in September 2020. Hence, throughout all these years contributions of Prof. Muhammad Aslam to promote the art of Scientific Writing and Publishing are praiseworthy for which he will always be remembered.

Prof. Muhammad Aslam has a very humble family background. Coming from a backward area of Dera Ghazi Khan in South Punjab and becoming a Major General in Pakistan Army, being appointed to the coveted posts of Principal, Dean and Vice Chancellor of medical universities is no less than a miracle. It also shows that with devotion, sincerity, hard work and honesty, one can scale great heights, make a mark to capacity building of institutions and establish one's own identity. I was very curious to find out how a boy born in one of the most backward districts of Punjab, Dera Ghazi Khan moved successfully on the academic ladder to become a doctor. Not only that, did M. Phil. and earned Ph. D., rose to the rank of Major General in Pakistan Army and joined the galaxy of Principals of Army Medical College. It was not all after retirement from Army as Major General, he also earned the coveted posts of Vice Chancellor of medical universities in private and public sector and became a glittering star on the scene of medical education in Pakistan. Hence, I requested Gen. Muhammad Aslam to share with me some of those details. In the beginning, he was a bit reluctant but on persuasion agreed to. This must have been not only a very difficult assignment but also very painful because old wounds which have healed with the passage of time become fresh when one recalls the past. I am extremely grateful to him for sharing some of the details of his academic professional career which will be very informative and helpful

for the healthcare professionals to know that God Almighty always rewards Honesty, Sincerity and Hard work.

Given below is the story as narrated by him which I have edited to some extent for the sake of brevity but ensuring that the important information is not missed out.

“I, was born on 1st June 1950 in the City of Dera Ghazi Khan in the Sheikh (Khoja) family of middle class Cloth Merchants. My father accorded the proprietary name of “Aslam Cloth House” to his wholesale business. He was aspired to see me his successor to excel his business of Cloth Merchant after him. But, God smiled since He wished to transform “business” to “education” through me in that Sheikh Khoja family.

Early Education: I was admitted in a primary school named as M.B. Primary School No.1 at Dera Ghazi Khan which, indeed, did seedling what I’m today. My notable class-fellows were Tariq Masood Khosa (later I.G Police Baluchistan/ DG FIA/ Federal Secretary Anti-Narcotics) and Arif Mansoor Khosa. Their younger brothers, Nasir Mahmood Khosa (later Chief Secretary, Punjab) and Asif Saeed Khosa (later Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Pakistan) also studied in the same primary school. The school was housed in almost demolish able condition those days with a large muddy compound, broken katcha (non-solid) boundary walls and seating with jute mats (Taat). The Headmaster was my distant relative Master Abdul Karim and was a strict disciplinarian. He used to keep an eye on all teachers, students and staff of the school. In those days, there was no school in the private sector in the town. This depicted that “education” is not bound to high buildings, bricks, glass and steel but the quality learning and training. I became almost a family member to Tariq and Arif Khosa’s family. Their parents, Faiz Muhammad Khan Khosa and Begum Attiya Rasool were so kind to me. I imbibed the following two spirits from their closeness in my life:-

1. Worth of Education
2. Virtue of Quality Living

We were stars of the class and were in competition in scoring, besides being close friends. The school injected lot of

morality, respect for elders and mannerism in us rather than globalization of knowledge and infra-red learning. I still cherish and quote those invisible learning phrases to my students in the class rooms. I used to go to my father's Cloth House straight from school and used to have a mid-day nap after having lunch there. Then in the afternoon, did the homework and around Maghreb prayer along with father went home from the Cloth House. Those were the happy days. Incidentally I couldn't appear in the Competitive Examination in 5th Class (Primary) to acquire Merit Scholarship by District Government as I was down with Typhoid Fever. In those days, Chloromycetin Capsules were scarcely available and someone had to go to Multan or Lahore to fetch those on higher price (black marketing). However, in a school regular examination of class 5th, I stood first in the school and was promoted to go to high school.

I got admission in Government High School No.1 located adjoining to our primary school. This was a huge school and a famous one. There were two High Schools in public sector. Our Headmaster was Ata Muhammad Khan Qaisrani who wore a high turban, Sherwani, White Shalwar Kamees and closed shoes round the year. He had a long stick in his right hand and travelled by his own tanga (horse cart). He was a superb administrator, disciplinarian and an academician. Those were the glorious and enjoyable days of my life time. Soon, I became a star of the school mainly for two reasons. Firstly, because of getting good grades/ scoring in the class and secondly, by participation in Urdu Debates at District and Divisional (Multan) level competition. My father used to subscribe for Urdu newspaper Nawa-i-Waqt, Tarjaman-ul-Quraan, Urdu Digest, and Bachoon Ki Dunya, Chattan (By Shorash Kashmiri) regularly at home and cloth house. That imbibed me with the habit of extra reading and ignited my thinking process. Then my father used to take me to live speeches of Maulana Maudoodi, Mufti Mehmood, Maulana Ehtesham-ul-Haq Thanvi, Air Marshal Asghar Khan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and also to few of Urdu Mushairas which provided me a broad spectrum of varying viewpoints of walk of life right from high schooling.

Now, I realize, how in depth seedling of intellectualism was inculcated in my mind and soul by my father, though, he was a simple matriculate and a cloth-merchant. Thus, it proves that we need to be educated and not only degree holders. I remained “Monitor” of the classes in those era which taught me the basic leadership qualities. Financially, we were neither too rich nor poor and passed contented life with honour, a mediocre life pattern.. Right from my Childhood, I disliked feudalism and God Almighty saved me to knock at the doors of Waderas or Sardars for my living or favour.

Government High School DG Khan was equipped with touch of class teachers and mentors with Islamic and Eastern Values (mainly came from Taunsa Sharif). They were selfless, hardworking, dedicated and responsible. In the middle (8th class) vernacular examination, I scored First Position in District DG Khan and my name is displayed on the Honour Board of the main Auditorium of the School, and got merit scholarship. Unfortunately, my mother died when I was in class 8th due to fulminant Pulmonary Tuberculosis. Those days, tuberculosis was a dilemma and considered as an Epidemic. Just before her death, she caught my hands and advised (in her weak voice) to take care of my two younger sisters and Allah enabled me to keep my promise. My father got remarried when I was in class 10th. I became a bit depressed and confused. That shook my concentration to some extent on studies which affected my Matriculation result. I stood 3rd in the Board of Intermediate & Secondary School Examination of Punjab Board rather standing 1st (as was expected) in the DG Khan District.

I was desirous to go to Government College Lahore and I was qualified but my father stopped me. He was touching his old age and wanted me to join him in cloth business for its reinforcement which I refused. I was motivated to get higher education and my father (for genuine financial growth reasons) wished to drag me into business. So, a compromise was made to do FSc (Pre-Medical) at Government Degree College Dera Ghazi Khan. My father got old and his business deteriorated. It gave me feelings of guilt not to join him in business but I was thrilled

to be called as an “Educationist” or as a “Competent Doctor” and not as a Cloth Merchant. My father pressurized me not to proceed to Medical College but to be a businessman which I declined. He, thus, reluctantly accorded me permission to join Nishtar Medical College Multan. On merit, I could get admission in KEMC but my father stopped me to go so far to Lahore. Thus, I joined NMC in First Year MBBS Class in December, 1969.

At Nishtar Medical College

At Nishtar Medical College, my life pattern changed. I was now more organized, well dressed, well-kept and tidy. We studied hard but gradually, I got more involved with extra-curricular activities. Those were the years of political polarization. Field Marshal M. Ayub Khan got dethroned through street power by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The power was handed over to Gen M. Yahya Khan. During his era, the biggest tragedy on earth occurred and we lost East Pakistan which was transformed to Bangladesh. Gen Yahya Khan conducted free and transparent election in the history of Pakistan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

I actively participated for Secretary and President of the Students Union from progressive block during my Nishtar College days. Many of the girls students of the College sided with us in the campaign, took processions and raised slogans on the College Street. This culture was a breakthrough in Nishtar’s history. I lost the election with a narrow margin. This electioneering taught me two big lessons which in later life paid me:-

1. I learnt to face the defeat with grace without denting my relations.
2. The fear to face and speak before a crowd or mob got mitigated. This singular character helped me to face the class in teaching. Furthermore, this property helped me in administrative pursuits when I was Principal or Dean or Vice Chancellor.

I made a lot of Nishtarian friends there and enjoyed each moment of my stay and shared laughter and tears. Nishtarian friends are in my heart and soul and they are so many. In one

evening when I was in Qasim Hall (Name of a hostel of NMC), my father along with his friend visited me in the hostel in the late evening. My father narrated that due to his old age and health condition, he cannot comply with the pressure of the cloth business, I should abandon medical studies and join him being the eldest son in business at DG Khan. He further said that my step uncle (a working partner) is taking advantage to have control of the business and has started misappropriation of monetary affairs in the business. He said that it would be very painful to run a house of a large family in case of failure of the business. I heard all this with broken heart and politely declined to leave Medical College and to join him in business. He accepted that with a gloomy face and wet eyes. I couldn't sleep the entire night. On one hand, was disobedience of my father (whom I loved the most) and fall of cloth business and, on the other hand, were my dreams to advance in education, career and life which I had woven since my primary school years. I wept and cried pinching my face over the pillow and made it wet so that my roommate doesn't know about my agony. In fact, God Almighty was making ways to transform our family from business to education. As today, all of my brothers and sisters are educated and good professionals in their own fields in various parts of the world.

This act of mine (in Sheikh Family) brought financial disaster and the family back home had to strive hard for quality living for about a decade or more. But, with unity and patience of our brothers and sisters the time passed honorably. All my younger brothers got education and appropriate jobs. They got married and settled. It was, indeed, a joint struggle of almost 25 years to reinstate the family to its lost glory. So, the entire family paid the price for this transformation from "business to education".

We became MBBS doctors in early 1976. We joined NMC in December 1969. So we spent 6½ years instead of 5 years of course with none of our fault. Due to Ayub Khan - ZA Bhutto tussle, 1971 War/ Dhaka fall and later College closure due to Tehreek of Tahfaze Khatm-e-Nabuwat, our one and a half academic years were spoiled. Cultured nations don't do that,

they preserve and try their utmost not to spill over academic years. Just after MBBS result, I got married with one of our class fellows, Dr. Anjum Sulzana.

Conscription in Army as GDMO

My desire was to do house job at NMC and do Post-graduation in ENT and to settle at Multan So, I, started finding an appropriate and affordable place to live with my wife. In those days, there were no sky rise buildings or flats or apartments built in Multan. When I searched and got shock of my life. I couldn't afford the rental of even a small house as the stipend of house officer's was only Rs.1200 per month. This was not the dream I looked for abstaining the desire of my father to join him in business. So, I decided to join Army as a "conscript officer" and then to leave after two years. At least, I would be able to have family living in an Army Mess with a batman. This is how I and my wife joined Army Medical Corps, Pakistan Army in May 1976.

I underwent Basic Military Training at Army Medical Corps (AMC) Centre, Abbottabad, whereas, my wife at Armed Forces Medical College (now AFGMI) for sixteen weeks. We both were posted as General Duty Medical Officer (GDMO) at CMH Peshawar. We both reported there and this was my first ever visit to Peshawar I was lucky to be supervised by Lt Col Mian Badruddin (Retd as Maj Gen) who was a Physician and Neurologist and Head of Medical Unit. He was a great disciplinarian, physician par excellence and a man of words. He trained me as a house physician right from taking/ recording history to physical examination and management of a patient. He trained me for minor procedures in the ward like intravenous infusion, pleural fluid aspiration and lumbar puncture, and the like. Unlike other GDMO young officers, I used to spend 3-4 hours in the evening in the ward for care and management of patients. Lt Col Badruddin issued standing orders that I would be a presenter in all clinico-pathological conference(s) held fortnightly at CMH Peshawar.

Our first baby (Sobia Aslam) was borne at CMH Peshawar on 14th August 1977. Thus, every 3rd or 4th night, I was on duty round the clock at CMH Peshawar in the face of paucity of

GDMO those days. I was rigorously trained since I joined Army and became a known young officer of CMH in a short span. One day, an old man wearing tweed coat, old fashioned neck-tie and grey trousers came to visit Commandant regarding health enquiry of his driver who was admitted in Medical Ward. The Commandant called me in his office to tell him about the health condition of the patient to old man. I straight away told him all the particulars, lab reports, treatment and future plans for disposal of the patient. The old man asked Commandant “who is this young officer?” The Commandant (Brig Khawaja) replied the old man, “Sir, General Ayub! He’s the best GDMO I have in my hospital. But, he has gone mad and intends to leave Army on completion of compulsory Army Service. He is a studious and hardworking guy with helping attitude. Please get him posted to Army Medical College, Rawalpindi so that he could do his further studies. Gen M. Ayub Khan then said to me “Gentleman! Please send an application with bio data (those days Curriculum Vitae term was rarely used) and you’ll be posted to the College as a Demonstrator. This is how, I was posted as Demonstrator in Physiology at Army Medical College and my wife as a GDMO to CMH Rawalpindi on recommendations of Principal, Army Medical College (Lt Gen M. Ayub Khan, Retd) We both reported to Rawalpindi on our new posting in February, 1978.

M. Phil in Physiology at PGMI Lahore: I really worked hard and then started preparing for FCPS Part-I Examination in Medicine & Allied Group. One day I was called by “Baba” (Principal Army Medical College) in his office. He said that he wishes to send me to do M.Phil. in Physiology on deputation. I requested him to give me one week to think over to which he reluctantly agreed to. I got leave and travelled to DG Khan to seek permission of my father. He was a simple man and said candidly “you spent your life years and I spent my money to make you a medical doctor like Physician, Surgeon, ENT or Eye Specialist. You should have done B.A or M.A with BT/ CT course to become a “master” (teacher). Why did you waste your lifetime and my money, but later, I got him convinced and he

permitted me. My wife, also, was not in favour for me to make basic sciences, a career.

I had an icon in my mind in the shape of Professor Dr. Gulzar Ahmad, a high stalwart in Physiology and my teacher at Nishtar. Thus, after having thought over for a week, I made a cognitive decision to General Ayub Khan to opt for M.Phil. in Physiology on deputation from Pak Army to Postgraduate Medical Institute (PGMI), Lahore. In the meanwhile, my wife got released from Army Medical Corps upon completion of her subscribed period to serve on compulsory Army Service.

Here, I got an opportunity to attend long teaching sessions given by Professor Gulzar Ahmad and Professor Rose Madan. Poetically, while attending lectures of Professor Gulzar, I felt that I am standing on the edge of blue coloured static lake and greenery in the backdrop and I am absorbed in soothing whisky voice of Professor Sahib. His beauty was that you can listen, understand and write each word of his lecture, an amazing quality. While attending the lectures of Professor Rose Madan, I felt that I am standing on bank of a sea in a full moon night and the tides of waves are in bloom. I am enjoying the noise of water, view of the wild waves and the beauty of full moon. She always would correlate the topic with applied and clinical physiology and end with a quiz. She had the knack to keep the audience arouse, active, alert and attentive. Those were the dedicated role model teachers!

I returned to Army Medical College after acquiring M.Phil. (Physiology). I was not contented with M.Phil and was aspiring to seek an opportunity to do Ph.D. All of my role model teachers were PhD's from renowned Universities of the world. I started collecting addresses of the Universities in UK and USA and wrote letters with Curriculum Vitae to find admission and seek financial assistance to do Ph.D.

Scholarship for PhD in UK: In late 1983, I was called by Maj Gen M.A.Z Mohyuddin (Retd as Lt Gen), then DG Medicine, in his office who broke the good news of life's time that Pakistan Army has selected me to go abroad on deputation for three years to

do Ph.D. (Physiology). Principal AMC had played a pivotal role for my selection, even though, I was at third position in seniority in Physiology in the Department at that time. That night, I cried and wept in “sajda” before Almighty Allah for His Blessings. My family back home was passing through a difficult time as the cloth business got shambled. My step uncle cheated my father and misappropriated the amount. The shops were closed and were put on rent. My father’s health condition deteriorated as he developed Diabetes Mellitus, Depression, and Idleness. The children (my step brothers and sisters) were growing and their expenditures and schooling raised the budgeting and so on. But, Allah wanted transformation of that family from business to education through me (my generation). I visited my hometown and broke the news to my ailing father. He was very happy but I could see his eyes wet having the feeling of departing his son.

In the meanwhile, Professor Dr. Brian Creamer, Dean St. Thomas’s Hospital Medical School (STMH), London was invited as an External Examiner in General Medicine at Army Medical College. Brig Iftikhar A. Malik (Retd as Maj Gen) requested Dr. Creamer to find my placement for PhD at STMH since he wished me to do doctorate from the institute where he qualified (under supervision of Professor John F. Tigh). On his (Dr. Creamer) return to London, I got a letter of my placement in the Sherrington School of Physiology in the area of Reproductive Endocrinology, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology at STMH London under auspices of University of London, U.K. I was lucky to have confirmed my placement before proceeding to London. Finally, in March 1984. I along with my family (wife, daughter and son), after hectic documentation, proceeded to London. This was my first-ever visit abroad.

Postgraduate Training in UK: Professor Mortyn T Jones (my Supervisor) in a courtesy asked me what I would like to have, “tea or coffee?” To which, I replied “Thank you” as per eastern custom. He said “what do you mean”, “yes, Thank you or No-thank you”. That was the first lesson to be learnt that we have to say “Thank you” whether we reply in affirmative or in negative.

The initial weeks or couple of months were dry, boring and somewhat in a state of confusion and I got acclimated to the new culture, new people, new slang of English language, new English Customs and new working environments. I, overall, very much liked their working habits except few intrigues. In England, it was almost 80% research work for doctoral degrees. I worked honestly, dedicatedly, consistently and with a smiling face taking active part in their positive discussion and was in consonance with their culture keeping our eastern values intact. Professor Jones, one day, asked me in a dinner party hosted by him at his house (he was an elderly bachelor), “Aslam! Are you like this or regimental training has made you like this?” This was a compliment as I was Mortyn’s first ever Pakistani student as a PhD Scholar. In second year, Professor Jones assigned me few lectures and tutorials (interactive) to deliver to BS students and to Pre-clinical MBBS students which was a learning experience of life’s time. In the beginning of 3rd year, he attached few BS students as a Co-Supervisor with me. So, he was making me to learn “the supervisory role”. To do research and to supervise research is a different ball-game. Some PhD’s are good researchers but not good research-teachers. Maj Farooq Ahmed Khan (Retd as Maj Gen) was about to complete his PhD in Pathology at Royal Free Hospital Medical School and provided me some useful tips.

During the research work, I learnt teaching text, teaching research, animal handling and care, animal operational procedures, accuracy, precision, quality assurance, designing experiments, modifications, honesty in interpretation, recording research and presentation of research data. The Professor used to have a weekly lab-meeting on Monday afternoon where we used to present data of our experimentations over a week, trouble shooting, remedial measures to overcome trouble shooting and the next week’s assignments. This was a classical way of monitoring students’ performance in research. From end of 2nd year training onwards, I realized that this process of learning has invoked in me the thinking process i.e. thinking of new idea, critical thinking, critical analysis, critical reasoning and critical appraisal. By eating and drinking research, some

scientific intuitions also started sprinkling on my neurons often. This is the essence of research. To be a good researcher, one has to be in a good research environs. As, to be a good teacher, one has to be in company of good scholars. The western society makes you to learn to listen more and talk less.

Participation and Presentation at Conference in USA

I proceeded to an International Conference on Neuroendocrinology for presentation of my data at San Francisco, California, USA which attracted a gathering of over 3000 participants and I had an opportunity to attend a plenary talk of Dr. Ganong who is an author of the world famous book on Physiology. His original work was relating catecholamine's and LHRH interactions in Human Body Functions. He was such a humble man and would never overstep a queue while holding his lunch plate.

When I returned from USA to London, I received a call from landline (since no email or WhatsApp or Mobile phone existed that time) at 2am (when I was having a jetlag) about the illness of my old father. He had a stroke with one side paralysis (Cerebrovascular Accident) and missed me. My cousin (my father's nephew), Prof. Dr. Khurshid Ahmad Qureshi (Retd as Principal QAMC, Bahawalpur) took him to Bahawalpur to get him treated by Prof. Attiq ur Rehman there and to look after him. I was consoled. I wished to travel to Pakistan to take care of his health. My research work and thesis was at the wedge of closing; my deputation period of three years was at the verge of expiry which meant I won't be able to afford my stay at London further. I prayed, cried and made *Duas* to Allah to help me and bless good health to my ailing father. Finally, I decided not to travel to Pakistan at this crucial juncture of my professional life and stay back to finish my core work. By the grace of Almighty Allah and with the guidance of my co-supervisor, Dr. Sarah Nicholson, I was able to complete, review and submit the thesis with the Examination Branch of the University of London on time.

PhD Defense Examination: I then started preparing for Defense Examination by critically reading each word of the thesis, going back to literature survey on the theme, discussing with peers and to give mock viva to my Supervisor, Professor Jones. I usually used to giggle a bit while appearing in mock viva to him. Then, came a D-Day for PhD Defense Examination and a team of Professors from University of Oxford, University of Sheffield and from King's College London with Professor Morty T. Jones as an observers conducted the examination for over three hours. That was the examination which I enjoyed the most in my life. It was such a "rapid fire" with volleys of exploratory, piercing, pinching, squeezing and thoughtful questions. I was not that a shy, timid and submissive "Aslam" during viva voce. I was fluent, bold and aggressive in explanatory answers given almost to all their queries by the grace of Allah. At the end of exhausting session, the examiners said "Young man! What you suggest and present could be "ideas of 10 years ahead and not of today-well done!" They went out of the room but in no time returned and one of them kissed my prone (forehead) and said "Young man! The University may take time to declare the result but we have no hesitation to bid you congratulation to make it with honour and grace".

I returned home and was cherished with the blossoming face of my wife, daughter and a son. They had also sacrificed to spare me and to see me lost over the weekends. That night, I prayed and in "sajda", the flood of tears was flown to thank "Al-Rahman and Al-Rahim" and missed my deceased mother (who died when I was in class 8th) and my ailing father (whom I couldn't serve when in stroke). In life, you can't get all, you get one thing at the cost of other. What a life!

Prof. Mortyn T. Jones, in the meanwhile, developed "Sarcoma - a notorious cancer" and got hospitalized. We visited him in the room and had few snaps and he offered me to stay with him in London and work at St. Thomas's Hospital Medical School and he may pay me reasonably well. I replied "Mortyn! I have loved working here and it goes with my temperament and working style. You know I am a depute of Pak Army, Govt.

of Pakistan which has spent a good sum on my training and I am bonded. Furthermore, I've responsibilities of my younger brothers and sisters on my shoulders. My father is aging and ill and his business has shattered. So, please forgive me and I need to return to my homeland with a cause". He was so pleased to hear my answer and embraced me while sitting in a wheel chair in the hospital room.

Resuming my job at Army Medical College: On way back to Pakistan, we stopped in Saudi Arabia to perform Umra. That was our first visit to KSA and to Haram. In Pakistan, to my disappointment, no leader of AMC asked me to give a presentation of my research work and how we can nurture and groom our faculty to make "intellectual progeny". Rather, it was a hidden desire that I may work at a low profile so that they could look taller.

In 1989, 2nd Biennial Conference of Pakistan Physiological Society (PPS) was organized at Army Medical College with a great success. It was a difficult time. I wished to contribute and start Post graduation in Physiology at Army Medical College and to send people to renowned Universities on sabbaticals, internship or on post-doc but the regimental system and leadership at varying levels had little flexibility under the stringent rules. My advice to all young teachers would be to study more and more the standard text books of the discipline and be involved in teaching/ lecturing extensively during the initial years of their profession.

Editorship of PAFMJ

In addition to my portfolio, I was assigned by Medical Directorate, the responsibility to manage the "Pakistan Armed Forces Medical Journal (PAFMJ)" as Editor, in 1992. I didn't know ABC of editing process that time. In fact, Lt Gen Mahmud A. Akhtar, Sug Gen/ DGMS (IS) owned PAFMJ right from its inception in 1956 and worked zealously till his retirement. Then it was not accorded due management and became irregular in publication and for about 3 years, wasn't published at all. Thus, it was de-recognized by Pakistan Medical & Dental Council (PM&DC).

So, Medical Directorate decided to revitalize PAFMJ as it is an official publication of Army Medical Corps.

I accepted the challenge and started reading books, and articles on Medical Writing and Editing. Also, I got in discussion with medical journalists of the country especially with Mr. Shaukat Ali Jawaid. I found him bitter person initially. But, gradually, it turned out to be a friendship and a comradeship of life time. His books fascinated me. He is bitter because he has the courage to call a spade, a spade. He is bitter because he talks candid and we talk “sugar coated”. This assignment consumed my evenings of 15 years without any financial return. The sustained efforts revitalized PAFMJ which became an accredited and recognized medical journal by PM&DC and HEC. I learnt so much and attended workshops and symposia on medical writings from the forum of Pakistan Medical Journalists Association (PMJA), Pakistan Association of Medical Editors (PAME), Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors (EMAME) and World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) in different cities of Pakistan and overseas. I am also contributing as Chief Editor of Pakistan Journal of Physiology (PJP).

Interaction with family of Intellectuals

I also conducted numerous workshop and short courses on Research Methodology and Medical Writing in various CMH's of the country and Medical Colleges with Maj Gen Farooq Ahmad Khan and Brig Muhammad Luqman. These activities culminated with a big bang when, as a Principal/ Dean, on motivation by Dr. Maqbool Jafary, Dr. Fatema Jawad and Mr. Shaukat Ali Jawaid, I organized the First National Conference on Medical Editing at Army Medical College Rawalpindi from 23-25 April 2007 under sponsorship of HEC/ NUST. I was humbled to be President PAME (2007-2010) and Vice President at large EMAME (2015-2017). This wide exposure for an inexperienced person like me has been an immense learning asset. It showed me a new galaxy comprising researchers, thinkers, writers, editors, reviewers, critics, publishers and printers. Indeed, I became a member of family of intellectuals which is an essence of life. This bonding

of new family was the real outcome of my efforts of almost two decades. It made me to become “a man of letters”. Money can’t buy that feeling and learning. I was appointed as Dean (2002) as Brigadier. I was promoted, to the rank of Maj Gen on 3rd March 2003 by the Grace of Allah. Subsequently, was appointed as Principal (2007) of Army Medical College Rawalpindi

In order to quench my thirst to disseminate knowledge, I started postgraduate teaching for M.Phil. /Ph.D. courses and for BMS Condensed Course for FCPS-I trainees at CPSP Karachi and at its regional centers (including Tribhuvan University Kathmandu, Nepal) since 1990. It was a sort of educational/ scientific meditation for me. I used to get relief in “Academia” in the madness of administrative responsibilities which sometimes become nerve breaking in our setting. Even as VC, UHS I took active part in teaching to postgraduate classes.

Unfortunately, my father expired in 1992 after having 2nd stroke. I couldn’t look after my parents much but I tried my utmost to take care of their wards during their lifetime and after their death. May Allah shower His Blessings upon all of them (Aamen).

Honours and Awards: I was humbled to receive several awards and fellowship in recognition to my services as follows:-

1. 1997: Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS) Open Gold Medal as a Young Researcher.
2. 1998: Fellowship of the Pakistan Academy of Medical Sciences (FPAMS).
3. 2000: FCPS in Physiology by CPSP Karachi.
4. 2002: Man of the Year 2002-XII Star Award by South Asia Publications.
5. 2004: Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military) by the President, Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
6. 2005: Honorary Fellowship of Bangladesh College of Physicians & Surgeons (BCPS).
7. 2008: Best University Teacher’s Award (2005) by the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan.

8. 2017: Life Time Achievement Award by Pakistan Physiological Society (PPS).
9. 2017: Life Time Achievement Award of Tamgha-i-Iqbal.

It was in early 2008, I got retired from Pakistan Army. I was accorded farewell with tradition of Army protocols. Some students cried, some were with wet eyes, some pinched their lips to hide. Some were making efforts to dry the streams of innocent tears on their cheeks and most of the staff prayed for my wellness and wellbeing. I was also moved and posing to be brave as at that moment I didn't want to show my weakness that how much I loved them. This is the reward which money can't buy. This is the reward which one wishes to feel at the end of 32 years of service. I never served as an "Afsar" or a "Naukar", but, I served as a "Professional". On my retirement, I had two offers to Head either Wah Medical College, Wah Cantt or as Head, Shifa College of Medicine, Islamabad. I preferred Shifa and joined as its Principal in March 2008.

Introduction to EMAME

I had an opportunity to participate in the 4th Conference of Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors (EMAME) held at Bahrain (Gulf) in 2008. I was blessed to organize the 5th Regional Conference of EMAME as a Chairman, Organizing Committee at CPSP Karachi in December, 2010. The Conference was participated by Honourable delegates from 18 countries in spite of Security and Law & Order situation those days. This was possible due to determination and collaborative efforts of Dr. Maqbool Jafary, Shaukat Ali Jawaid and their team.

South Asian Association of Physiologists (SAAP) was established in 2007 with the vision of Prof. Dr. Arif Siddiqui (late) and I was blessed to organize the 1st SAAP Conference at Shifa College of Medicine, Islamabad in August 2008. This was probably the first ever big Conference convened at SCM. I was elected as the founder President, SAAP, unanimously.

Tragic event in the family: Life takes different turns at various angles. In 2010, my son-in-law, M. Bilal Aman at the age

of 33 years had sudden cardiac arrest and expired. He was a promising boy working in Roche Pharmaceutical, Karachi which shook us and changed the pattern of our life. I decided to have my widow daughter and the orphan little grandson and grand-daughter with us and to take care of them appropriately. Bilal developed pain in epigastrium and retching, the Senior Gastroenterologists took it as digestive issue. The senior doctors must adopt holistic approach to the patient and not the symptomatic treatment only. This approach may suit a general medical practitioner but not a specialist or an expert. God willing, the kids are growing well in manner and education. My daughter is doing her job well. But, no one on earth can make up the irreparable loss. We bow our head before His Mercy.

The SCM was making all out efforts to get a charter from the Parliament for emergence of a University titled “Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University (STMU)”, Islamabad. The Board of Trustees of “Shifa Family”, I was entrusted to be elevated as the Founder Vice Chancellor of STMU. It was a pleasant surprise to me as I had no clue about that earlier. This was the fruit of my honesty, hard work, righteousness and helping attitude to all. The statutes, regulation and policies were formulated, university officials were inducted and first ever meeting of Senate and Syndicate of STMU were convened.

Vice Chancellor at UHS Lahore

I got selected by Government of the Punjab as Vice Chancellor, University of Health Sciences (UHS) Lahore. It was in process for 2-3 months earlier. I asked opinion from my well-wishers and friends. Many of them stopped me to join since it was polarized environment at UHS. My family especially my grandchildren were double-minded and reluctantly allowed me to proceed to Lahore. Most of my friends also asked me to refrain. There occurred an urge within me to take the challenge. Finally, I accepted the challenge

I started meeting with the VC's of Medical Universities (especially located at Lahore (KEMU, FJMU and neighboring SZH-FPGMI) and all Principals of Medical/ Dental Colleges to bridge

the communication gap and to enhance academia jointly. I made sure to keep them on my right side giving them respect which is their due. The ice started melting. That was a day when during the month of Ramadan at the time of prayer of Juma-tul-Widaa, me and the Chairman/ CEO SZH-FPGMI unlocked the gate of the dividing wall and promised to have bilateral flow of traffic between the two sister institutes. And then, organized joint research conferences, symposia, workshops, short courses and interactive sessions. It brought so much positive effect, mutual trust and multiplied progress of all institutions.

The posts of Pro Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Controller of Examinations, Professor of Medical Education, Professor of Pharmacology, Chair Nursing School, Chair-Institute of Allied Health Sciences and others were filled with proper selection board(s). The post of Treasurer was duly processed but couldn't be filled due to idiosyncrasy of bureaucratic puzzles. The new academic programs of MSc Nursing, M.Phil. / Ph.D. in various disciplines of Allied Health Sciences, MSc/ Ph.D. in Medical Education, M.Phil. / Ph.D. in various disciplines in Medical Sciences were introduced and enhanced. An effort was made to provide a "learning and working environment" to Faculty and Students till late hours in the University.

I may utter an important "tip" here for managers or leaders of a Medical University. They may develop an acumen of "multi-tasking to the employee" and then do the accountability in an unobserved manner. No one dies of hard work or overwork, but people with little work or no-work get bored or develop "attitudes". "An idle mind is the devils workshop". Many of the managers can't do multi-dimensional work themselves and can't even design multi-tasking to their subordinates. I tried my utmost to assign the tasks (in addition to their core duties) to my colleagues, subordinates and students.

UHS became a hub of academic activity and it was ranked 2nd Top Most University amongst the Medical Universities (after Aga Khan University) in Pakistan for consecutive four years (2013, 2014, 2015 & 2016) by HEC.

By Mid-February 2017, it was all set to say “Goodbye” to UHS as my four years tenure of VC was over. I was accorded a warm “send of” with emotional speeches, tears, hugs, prayers, silent lips, empty eyes, unsaid words, poems and standing ovation

Pro Vice Chancellor at NUMS

Lt. Gen. Syed Muhammad Imran Majeed, VC National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) is the First Ever Best Graduate of Army Medical College Rawalpindi. He is a noble gentleman, a well-read person and has an in built philosopher like touch. The then Federal Minister of Health and President PM&DC insisted me to join PM&DC as an Advisor. The VC NUMS sent my CV and got its due approval by the Chancellor as Pro VC NUMS. Thus, I joined NUMS as its Pro VC on 4th May 2017. I advised myself not to cross the boundaries of respect and relationship as I’m not the leader but a deputy to the leadership. I would accord my opinion, advice, critical analysis and the roadmap of do ability (with merits and demerits) to VC and then would leave to his vision to adopt or not to adopt. Once the decision is made by him, I, with the team, has to implement it wholeheartedly like a soldier scholar. I believe, I adapted it throughout my tenure, to the best of my ability. The opportunity for NUMS, in my opinion, is very vast with the view that it is patronized by Pakistan Army. Thus, it is disciplined, structured and stands accountable. This stamps the “Trust” of people in NUMS.

My three years contract as Pro Vice Chancellor - NUMS (May 2017 - May 2020) was over. I said “Goodbye” to VC and all of my colleagues with pride and a smile and started working from home on educational activities like article reviewing, synopses reviewing, Thesis evaluation, writing review articles, writing chapter of books, writing “Obituaries” of lovable, writing letters to Editors and dealing with the societal matters of SAAP as its President, voluntarily.

Lessons learnt in Life

I have learnt some lessons from life which are:

- Refrain from doing “Naukri” or “Afsari”, Work as a trustable “Professional”.

- Don't listen half, understand quarter and talk double. According to Andy Stanley, leaders who don't listen will eventually be surrounded by people who don't speak.
- Adopt and adapt the logo of "Service before Self".

The Last word: What I have gained in life or what I have lost in life, believe me "I don't know". Probably the famous poet Gulzar depicts my feelings:-

آہستہ چل زندگی، ابھی کئی قرض چکانا باقی ہے
کچھ درد مٹانا باقی ہے، کچھ فرض نبھانا باقی ہے
رفتار میں تیرے چلنے سے کچھ روٹھ گئے، کچھ چھوٹ گئے
رُوٹھوں کو منانا باقی ہے، روتوں کو ہنسانا باقی ہے
کچھ حسرتیں ابھی ادھوری ہیں، کچھ کام بھی اور ضروری ہے
خواہشیں جو گھٹ گئیں اس دل میں، ان کو دفنانا باقی ہے
کچھ رشتے بن کر ٹوٹ گئے، کچھ جڑتے جڑتے چھوٹ گئے
ان ٹوٹے چھوٹے رشتوں کے زخموں کو مٹانا باقی ہے
ان سانسوں پر حق ہے جن کا، ان کو سمجھانا باقی ہے
آہستہ چل زندگی، ابھی کئی قرض چکانا باقی ہے ---

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Important Points

1. My father wanted me to join the family business of cloth merchants but I wanted to become a professional and educationist.
2. I got admission in Nishtar Medical College Multan and graduated in 1976.
3. Got conscription in Army as GDMO. Me and my wife were posted at CMH Peshawar.
4. Did M. Phil from PGMI Lahore and was later awarded scholarship by the Army to do PhD in UK in which Principal AMC Lt.Gen. Ayub played a vital role.
5. In addition to my portfolio Medical Directorate also assigned me the responsibility to be the Editor of PAFMJ and I accepted that challenge.
6. Attending conferences of PMJA, PAME and EMAME in Pakistan and overseas introduced me to the family of intellectuals which helped me to become a man of Letters
7. I could not look after my parents as I was away but tried to take care of my brothers and sisters who are all educated and I was able to transform the Khoja family from cloth merchants to Professionals, Educationists for which the whole family had to pay a price.
8. Tragic events in the family in 2010 shook us and changed the pattern of our life.
9. UHS held convocations for the first time when I was VC and it became the best top ranking medical university by the HEC in public sector for many years.
10. I have learnt some lessons in Life which are refrain from doing “*Naukari*” or “*Afsari*” but work as a trustable “*Professional*”.