

## OBITUARY



### **PROFESSOR DR MOHAMMAD ATAUR RAHMAN**

*Pride of Performance, Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Medicine)*

*Distinguished National Professor*

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Professor Dr Mohammad Aatur Rahman, professor of clinical biochemistry at Dr. A. Q. Khan Institute of Biotechnology & Genetics (KIBGE) passed away peacefully at his home on 26 September, 2015 (11 *zilhaj*) during *fajr azan—inna lillahi wa innallaha rajai'oon*. Dr Rahman may very rightly be described as a pioneer in the biochemistry teaching and research in Pakistan. Born in a pious family in Ajmer (India) on 27 May 1929 he got early school and college education in Ajmer. He was youngest among his siblings—4 brothers and 1 sister. Right from his schooling he was brilliant both in studies and extracurricular activities. His keen interest in science led him to pursue postgraduate studies in chemistry at Government College, Lahore. After earning master's degree in chemistry from GC Lahore in 1953, he moved to Karachi to start his career at Dow medical college for a short time. He soon got a scholarship for PhD studies in biochemistry. He worked on 'biochemistry of retina' for his doctoral thesis under the guidance of Professor L. M. Kerly. On return from London, he joined the newly established Basic Medical Science Institute (BMSI) at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, Karachi as assistant professor and chairman department of biochemistry and soon became professor of biochemistry. This institute was established with the help of Indiana University Medical Centre, Indiana, USA with the objective of training young medical graduates aspiring to teach basic subjects in the medical colleges of Pakistan. While at BMSI, Dr Rahman taught biochemistry not only to young faculty members at the medical colleges leading to the award of MPhil/ PhD but also contributed significantly towards establishing biochemistry department at Karachi University campus in more than one ways. In its early days, biochemistry department at KU suffered deficiency in terms of staff, equipment, space and library facilities. On request of the Head of the department Dr M.A.Wali, Professor Rahman allowed the staff and students to utilize the lab and library facilities at his department. Some junior lecturers including S. I. Ahmad and myself were enrolled for MPhil in biochemistry under his supervision. He was an expert advisor for appointment of teaching faculty at Karachi university. Professor Rahman taught biochemistry at Oxford (UK), University College London and Indiana University Medical Centre, Indianapolis (USA) beside being a visiting professor at Koyoto University (Japan). During his long successful career he supervised 90 MPhil and PhD theses, which speaks volumes about his productivity in research. With the help of national and international agencies, he organized many symposia, conferences and workshops to promote medical education and research.

Professor Rahman has to his credit six books and over 200 research papers published in national and international journals. He is credited to have made significant contributions towards solving problems of malnutrition that are so rampant in developing countries. He developed animal model of malnutrition and demonstrated that the latter can be successfully overcome by especially reconstituted vegetable protein-rich diet. After rigorous clinical trials, these have become part of treating protein-energy malnutrition in children and young women. Another significant contribution is the study on role of malnutrition in cataract formation. His study deals with the role of lens proteins during experimental diabetes showing that the glycolytic pathway plays important role in diabetics as well as in senile cataract formation. Amongst the unique aspects

of his work are the studies on nutritional diseases, mainly malnutrition, diabetes mellitus, iron deficiency anemia in collaboration with scientists working in these areas at Manchester metropolitan university, UK. His studies on urolithiasis and schizophrenia have attracted international recognition.

After serving BMSI at JPMC for more than 30 years, where he was bestowed upon the life-time achievement award, late Hakim Mohammad Saeed appointed him Dean at Hamdard University. Here he laid the foundation of Pharmacology laboratories. Later, Dr Baqai requested him to join Baqai Medical College, where he helped in setting up the department of biochemistry as well as designing the courses on medical technology. On fulfillment of these conditions, BMC was awarded the status of university. He was associated with BMC and BMU for 5 years as Dean postgraduate studies. He also contributed significantly towards development of Ziauddin university, where also he served as professor of biochemistry and dean postgraduate studies.

He was extremely passionate about clinical research and joined HEJ research institute of chemistry as professor of clinical biochemistry. Later he joined Dr. A. Q. Khan Institute of Biotechnology and Genetics (KIBGE) at Karachi university, where he served honourarily for the benefit of students and faculty members.

In addition to his contribution towards teaching and research in biochemistry, he was instrumental in establishing Pakistan Society of Biochemists (later called Pakistan Society of Biochemists & Molecular Biologists) as early as 1964 and served the society for more than 6 decades as its founder secretary and later as president.

His contribution to medical education in Pakistan has been duly recognized by national and international professional bodies. Dr Rahaman received DSc (HC) from Open International University for complementary medicine, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Following is a list of some of the major awards given to him.

- Hilal-i-Imtiaz (second highest civil award of Government of Pakistan) in medical sciences
- President of Pakistan's award of 'Pride of performance'(1992) in the field of medicine
- Life-time achievement award (2007) by Jinnah postgraduate medical centre for dedicated service to the institution
- Higher Education Commission award of "Distinguished National professor"
- "Gold medal of the Pakistan academy of Sciences as a Token of recognition of outstanding contribution in biological sciences"
- Fellowship of the US AID for postdoctoral work in the USA, Indiana University Medical Centre, Indianapolis, 1962-63
- National Book Council of Pakistan, first prize for meritorious service rendered in the field of research in medicine, 1986
- Certificate of appreciation for completion of the cooperative research project with US department of agriculture, 1981
- Japan society for promotion of science award of visiting professor, Koyoto university medical centre, Kyoto
- Royal society visiting scientist fellowship, London
- First prize for meritorious services in the field of research in medical sciences, Government of Pakistan
- Interchange of rehabilitation scientist and experts program of vocational administration, Washington
- Fogarty foundation fellowship, NIH, USA
- WHO research worker's grant, King's college hospital, London
- WHO research worker's grant, Karolinska institute, Stockholm
- WHO regional visiting scientist program
- Dr Zainul Abedin commemorative award of Pakistan society of biochemists,
- Adjunct professor, University of Lahore

Membership of professional bodies:

- Nutritional Society of Great Britain (Honorary)

*OBITUARY – PROFESSOR DR MOHAMMAD ATAUR RAHMAN*

- Committee in biology, Third World Academy of Science
  - Biochemical Society of Great Britain
  - Executive board, International Diabetes Federation
  - Advisory committee United Nations University, Tokyo
  - Association of clinical biochemistry, UK
- Fellowships of professional bodies:
- Pakistan Academy of Sciences, Islamabad, 1980
  - Third world academy of sciences, Trieste, Italy, 1988
  - International college of nutrition, Japan, 1995
  - Fellow National Academy of medical sciences, Lahore, 1996
  - Pakistan Society of Biochemistry & Molecular Biologists, 2003
  - International Union of nutritional sciences, ,USA, 2001
  - AAAS (former fellow)
  - Nominee for the award of fellowship of Royal Society, UK
  - Japan Society of promotion of science award (visiting professor at Kyoto University)

Professor Rahman was simple and humble man who never cared about fame or wealth; exclusively an unassuming person who worked relentlessly for the betterment of education and society. He never compromised on principles and was remarkably loyal and devoted to his profession despite of having number of hurdles in his impeccable career. He is survived by his wife Dr Bushra Rahman and children, Aasim Rahman, Dr Sabeen Rahman and Aali Rahman—all highly qualified and dedicated to their professions. Dr Bushra Rahman worked with him on multiple projects and published several research papers in leading journals.

Time moves on but memories remain!

*Syed Nazrul Hasnain – Former student of Prof. Dr. Mohammad Aatur Rahman*