EDITORIAL

The United Nations recognise the outstanding contribution of the Sudanese Childhood Diabetes Association amidst the griefs of COVID-19

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The cover of this issue of Sudanese Journal of Paediatrics (SJP) pays tribute to Professor Hassan Mohammed Ahmed Ali, Member of the Editorial Board of SJP, whom we dreadfully lost recently following COVID-19 infection. As President of the University of Medical Sciences and Technology (UMST), he maintained his seminal contribution to child health till he fell sick with the disease. His journey in the medical field vividly depicts commitment to the wellbeing of children worldwide as well as to professionalism [1,2].

Following graduation from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum (U of K) in 1971, he worked as medical officer, after the internship training, in several Sudanese towns and cities spread over thousands of miles, including Juba (Southern Sudan, currently Capital of South Sudan), Wad Medani and Algitaina in central Sudan, and Dulgo in the Northern State. He was then chosen by the Ministry of Heath to join the first batch of Sudanese doctors to get their training locally for specialisation in paediatrics. He obtained the degree of Mastership in Paediatrics and Child Health (MPCH, renamed MD in Clinical Paediatrics) from U of K in April 1980. He received post-doctoral training in Liverpool, UK and the Diploma of Tropical Child Health (DTCH), University of Liverpool in 1981.

In 1982, he joined the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health (DPCH), Faculty of Medicine, University of Gezira (U of G) Wad Medani, Sudan as Lecturer and was promoted to Associate Professor in 1987 and to full Professor in 1992. He was the Head of the DPCH during two periods (1984-1987 and 1992-1997). During these periods, he established the regulations and academic requirements for the department and also the Children’s Teaching Hospital by conversion of functional buildings. He also established co-operation and partnership with similar academic and health care institutes including U of K (Sudan); Dusseldorf University and University of Heidelberg (Germany); University of Liverpool, King’s College, London and University of Dundee (UK); Colombia University, USA; and the World Health Organization (WHO). Through a collaborative research program, he obtained

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MD degree in 1991 from the University of Heidelberg, Germany. Also, these research programs resulted in remarkable publications dealing with childhood infectious diseases, nutrition and hepatology. During 1993-1997, he was Director, Medial Education Centre (WHO collaboration centre for community oriented medical education). He was also the Convener of MD paediatric courses at Faculty of Medicine, U of G (4 years postgraduate course in paediatrics leading to MD degree).

From June 1997 to August 2000, he worked as Consultant in Charge, Pediatric Accident and Emergency Unit, King Khalid University Hospital, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; and Consultant in Charge and Director, International Children Hospital, Doha, Qatar.

Returning to Sudan, he became the Founding Dean and Head Department of Paediatrics, UMST (2000-2008), Vice Chancellor, Alzaim Alazhari University (2008-2010), Director and Founder, Institute of Education and Development, UMST (2010-2012); and then President of UMST, maintaining his seminal contribution to child health till he fell sick with COVID-19 infection.

Prof Hassan was Member of the Arab Board for Medical Specialization (1988-1996), Sudan Medical Specialization Board since 2004, Head of Evaluation Committee, Paediatric Specialization Board (2004-2009); and Member of the Medical and Health Committee, Ministry of High Education and Research, Sudan (2000-2010). He was the Academic Secretary of the Sudan Association of Paediatricians (SAP, 2003-2005), and contributed in 2016 a book (in Arabic) titled “Fundamentals of Paediatrics and Nutrition”.

The late Professor Hassan Mohammed Ahmed Ali was mourned in Sudan and abroad via a prolific number of social networking sites having been the role model for how lifetime commitment to child health and wellbeing should be [3].

Amidst the griefs of COVID-19, the good news came that the Sudanese Childhood Diabetes Association (SCDA) has been selected as a recipient of a United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases Award for 2021 (Figure 1). The outstanding recent achievement of the SCDA was the inauguration of the Sudan Childhood Diabetes Center (SCDC) which took place during the celebration of the World Diabetes Day (WDD, 11 November).
November 14, 2019) [4]. The Centre, which serves 3,000 children in Khartoum State and supervises 25 diabetes clinics in other states of Sudan, is considered as the largest of its kind in Africa [5].

The SCDA was initiated as a non-governmental organisation in 2003 by Fowzia Malik and Ambassador Babikir Ali Abdel Rahim to serve the needs of children with diabetes. It was presided over by Professor Zain A. Karrar, Ex-President of SAP, and Member of SJP Editorial Board. Dr. Mariam Zaki acted as a convener of the SCDA Board which included several charitable individuals. In 2005, Professor Mohamed Ahmed Abdullah, Ex-President of SAP and Member, Editorial Board of SJP chaired the SCDA, and Dr. Amani Gindeel became the Convener. The following years witnessed establishing paediatric endocrinology services from almost scratch by upgrading facilities for childhood diabetes, providing medication for free, and training multidisciplinary staff including 13 paediatric endocrinologists. A local paediatric endocrinology fellowship program was started accompanied by establishing 25 diabetes clinics in all states of Sudan. This outstanding success story is narrated in an Original Article in the current issue of the SJP.

Also, amidst the griefs of COVID-19, the review article in the current issue of SJP highlights the success story of Sudan Medical Council (SMC) in laying the foundations for teaching medical professionalism in medical schools in Sudan. The foundations of professionalism are the commitment to the highest standards of excellence both in practice of medicine and in knowledge generation and dissemination [6]. As a result, and under the guidance of Professor Zain A. Karrar, Ex-President of SAP and Member, Editorial Board of SJP, SMC became one of the first ten regulatory authorities worldwide, and the first in the region, to obtain recognition as the national accrediting body by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) in June 2018 [7].

Figure 2. Photo taken by the Sudan Ministry of Information. The International Editor of the Sudanese Journal of Paediatrics (Prof. Mustafa A. Salih, second from left) taking the modified version of the Hippocratic Oath in a ceremony at the Presidential Palace attended by the President of Sudan. First from left: Dr. Taha Sadig Ahmed (Formerly, Consultant, Clinical Neurophysiology and Associate Professor, Physiology Department, College of Medicine, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia).
Sudanese doctors were the first around the globe to offer their lives fighting coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic [8,9]. This reflects the engraved code of professionalism and ethics which they honour. It is noteworthy that Sudan is unique regarding the fact that, till recently, graduating doctors take the modified version of the Hippocratic Oath in a ceremony at the Presidential Palace attended by the President of Sudan. Both of us have passed through this unforgettable experience (Figure 2).

REFERENCES

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