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AKU Researchers Unravel Genetics of High Blood Pressure

Genetics researchers at AKU have pinpointed a gene involved in the modulation of high blood pressure. This new finding will make it possible to predict which individuals will better respond to particular treatments. It may also contribute to forming the basis for the development of tests aimed at

relevant research focusing on producing low-cost, accessible and innovative solutions. AKU provides an enabling environment to conduct research for needs that are widespread.



Professor Philippe Frossard, Director of the GMCD Group and Chair, Department of Biological and Biomedical Sciences, with his team of researchers.

assessing a person's genetic susceptibility to essential hypertension. The University recognises that the endemic problems of a region beset with financial difficulties and low development indicators can be addressed only through

Essential hypertension, or elevated blood pressure of unknown cause, is a major health problem in Pakistan, affecting 18 per cent of adults over the age of 15 and one out of every three persons over 45. It represents a significant risk for heart attack, stroke and kidney failure. While the condition can be traced to genetic causes, environmental factors such as diet, stress and exercise contribute to its development. This complex interplay of variable factors has so far eluded most attempts at identifying the molecular basis of essential hypertension. While various drugs are available for blood-pressure control, any one drug is effective in only 50 per cent or less of patients, indicating a poor match between pharmacological action and the underlying molecular mechanisms of the disease.

The Gene Markers and Complex Disorders (GMCD) Research Group at AKU has found that an individual variation in the angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) gene is associated with an inherited tendency to develop high blood pressure. ►

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AKU-IED Assists Afghanistan in Developing Teacher Educators

After two decades of instability, a new era of hope has dawned in Afghanistan. To enhance personal and social development, the Government of Afghanistan has prioritised access to quality education, mandating its Ministry of Education to develop a new curriculum for all grades and types of schools. The Ministry is focusing on needs analysis, which includes the development of a curriculum framework, syllabi and textbooks.

AKU's Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) is assisting these initiatives through AKDN's Educational Support Programmes in Afghanistan. ►

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VAP Rates Reduced Through Staff Education Programme

Ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP) is among the most common causes of hospital-acquired infections worldwide. On average, VAP is reported to complicate between 20 and 60 per cent of all ICU admissions in the western world while data from Pakistan is comparable at rates of 20 to 40 per cent. Such alarming rates led Dr Nawal Salahuddin, Assistant Professor in the Section of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at AKU, to undertake a research study aimed at reducing the incidence of VAP at Aga Khan University Hospital.

“VAP adds considerable costs to patient care, in terms of increased morbidity and mortality as well as direct monetary costs of care,” says Dr Salahuddin. Focusing on prevention of infection, an educational plan was devised that stressed locally available and low-cost measures. Lectures, tutorials, bedside teaching and visual aids were used to educate ICU nursing, technical and medical house staff about preventive practices for VAP, with senior ICU nursing staff ensuring that all shift workers were exposed to the programme. Besides Dr Salahuddin, team members included Dr Afia Zafar, Dr Shahid Javed Husain, Dr Shahla Siddiqui, Dr Muhammad Farrukh Noor, Dr Kashif Hussain, Laila Sukhyani and Muhammad Islam.

Infection Control nurses played a key role in collecting and collating data. From January 1 to December 31, 2002, 39 episodes of ventilator-associated pneumonia occurred during a total of 3,140 ventilator days among 333 patient admissions. A mean VAP infection rate of 13 ± 1.2 per 1,000 ventilator days was calculated for the pre-intervention period. In the corresponding post-intervention period in 2003, 19 episodes of VAP were recorded in a total of 2,905 ventilator days among 344 patient admissions. This corresponds to a VAP infection rate of 6.5 ± 1.5 per 1,000 ventilator days, representing a statistically and clinically significant reduction.

A 51 per cent reduction in VAP rates occurred by educating and reinforcing accepted preventive practices. “What is exciting is that we were able to make such a major impact simply by putting these measures together,” explains Dr Salahuddin. “And what makes these results particularly meaningful is that no costs were added to patient care.” ■



In a study undertaken by Dr Nawal Salahuddin (right), Assistant Professor, lectures, tutorials, bedside teaching and visual aids were used to educate ICU nursing, technical and medical house staff about preventive practices for ventilator-associated pneumonia.

Dr Waris Qidwai Honoured by World Organization of Family Doctors



Dr Waris Qidwai, Associate Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at AKU, was honoured by the World Organization of Family Doctors (Wonca) with the ‘Global Family Doctor of the Month Award’ for May 2004.

The award’s criterion is outstanding performance in Family Medicine in difficult circumstances, and Dr Qidwai has been feted for his academic achievements in the context of the developing world.

Dr Qidwai will present five papers, the highest by any participant, at the forthcoming World Conference of Family Doctors. Scheduled to be held in Orlando, USA, in October 2004, the Conference will be the largest scientific gathering of doctors in recent history with up to 15,000 physicians expected to attend. Dr Qidwai’s presentations will include a paper on ‘Bioethics Perceptions and Family Physicians in Karachi, Pakistan’, an area in which he conducted pioneering research at AKU in 1999-2000. ■



Dr Mohammad Wasay Receives Gold Medal and Junior Researcher Award

Every year the Pakistan Academy of Medical Sciences (PAMS) awards a gold medal and Junior Researcher Award for the best scientific research conducted in Pakistan. PAMS works under the patronage of the President of Pakistan and its primary objective is to promote research and education in the medical sciences.

The recipient of the 2003 PAMS award is Dr Mohammad Wasay, Assistant Professor in the Section of Neurology at AKU. Dr Wasay has been honoured for research which is expected to enhance early diagnosis and effective treatment of intracranial tuberculomas. "This award is an honour for AKU. Research is teamwork and the whole team deserves credit," says Dr Wasay. The University strives to provide an enabling environment to faculty and students to conduct research for needs that are widespread.

In January 2004, Dr Wasay was invited by the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) to attend the 2004 Leadership Forum meeting in the USA, where he presented a paper titled 'Neurological Care in Pakistan'. The Forum promotes neurology across the globe and Dr Wasay was the only neurologist selected from the Asia-Pacific region. Described by AAN as "a neurology advocate in Pakistan", Dr Wasay believes that "our job as neurologists is not only to write prescriptions but to create an atmosphere where optimal neurological care can be delivered. Advocacy of neurology is the single most important step towards improved neurological care and outcome in Pakistan." ■

Vision, Mission and Values

The formulation of AKU's Vision, Mission and Values was a participatory process that entailed consultations with faculty, staff and students as well as other stakeholders, and deliberation at the Board level, before final approval by AKU Board of Trustees.

VISION

Aga Khan University will be an autonomous, international institution of distinction, primarily serving the developing world and Muslim societies in innovative and enduring ways.

MISSION

Aga Khan University is committed to the development of human capacities through the discovery and dissemination of knowledge, and application through service.

It seeks to prepare individuals for constructive and exemplary leadership roles, and shaping public and private policies, through strength in research and excellence in education, all dedicated to providing meaningful contributions to society.

To advance this Mission, AKU will:

- Offer programmes of international quality;
- Respond to identified needs in the countries and regions which it serves;
- Prioritise teaching and research which will inform and underpin intellectual innovation and change;
- Provide service to advance its educational and research mandate;
- Foster and develop leadership capacity through its education and research programmes;
- Assess its impact and effectiveness;
- Promote access and equity by taking positive measures to make the University inclusive of all socio-economic groups addressing the particular needs and circumstances of the disadvantaged; promoting the welfare and advancement of women;
- Engage in knowledge networking and emerging technologies;
- Add value by promoting partnership and networking across the Aga Khan Development Network, and with other national and international institutions.

VALUES

As an international institution, in achieving its Mission, Aga Khan University operates on the core principles of quality, relevance, impact and access.

Inspired by Islamic ethics, humanistic ideals and the philosophy of the Aga Khan Development Network, the University is committed to building an environment that fosters intellectual freedom, distinction in scholarship, pluralism, compassion, and humanity's collective responsibility for a sustainable physical, social and cultural environment. ■

AKU Faculty and Staff Circle the Globe in 2004



Dr Fauzia Shamim, Associate Professor, AKU-IED, presented a paper on 'Teaching Teachers to Teach Young Learners: Issues and Dilemmas' at the Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) Fifth National Conference titled 'Teaching English to Young Learners: Why & How?' in **Indonesia** in February.



Dr Anjum Halai (MEd,'96) Assistant Professor at AKU-IED, visited the PDC-East Africa in Dar-es-Salaam, **Tanzania**, in May to set up a research project titled 'Case Studies of School Improvement in East Africa'.



Jane Rarieya (MEd,'99), Senior Instructor, AKU-IED, presented a paper titled 'Reflective Dialogue: What's in it for Teachers? A Pakistan Case' at the 6th International Conference on Education in Athens, **Greece**, in May. She also presented a paper on 'Investigating Students' Uptake of Reflective Practice: A Pakistan Case' at the 3rd Carfax International Conference on Reflective Practice, Gloucester, **UK**, in June.



Kulsoom Jaffer, Instructor at AKU-IED, presented a paper on 'Improving Educational Monitoring and Evaluation System' at the Doctoral School Conference organised in June by the Institute of Education, University of London, **UK**.



Dr Irma Gavino, Associate Professor, AKU-SON, presented a paper titled 'Effects of the Nurse Programme on the Self-Esteem of Abused Filipino Women' and Jacqueline Dias (RN,'85), Assistant Professor and Director, AKU-SON, presented a paper on 'Impediments to Learning in Nurse Training in Pakistan' at the 3rd International Multidisciplinary Health Care Conference in Johannesburg, **South Africa**, in March.



Dr Yasmin Amarsi, Dean, AKU-SON, was invited by Chiba University, **Japan**, in February for a lecture on 'Distinctive Features of Nursing Care in Pakistan and its Relation to Pakistani Culture'.



Professor Lactitia King, Regional Director, AKU-ANS Programme, East Africa, presented the opening keynote address titled 'Dealing With Human Resource Challenges Facing Health Systems Globally' at the 3rd International Multidisciplinary Health Care Conference of the Department of Health Studies, University of South Africa, in Johannesburg, **South Africa**, in March. The conference was jointly organised by the Global Network of the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centres for Nursing and Midwifery Development.



Dr Javaid A. Khan, Professor and Consultant Chest Physician, Pulmonary Section, AKU, was invited by Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) to attend the 4th World Asthma Meeting in Bangkok, **Thailand**, in February. Dr Khan, whose visit was funded by the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD), presented a paper titled 'Knowledge of Health Care Staff on Asthma in Pakistan'.



Dr Saeed Hamid, Professor, Department of Medicine, AKU, was invited to a meeting of the Guidelines and Publications Committee of the World Gastroenterology Organization in New Orleans, **USA**, in May. ■

Dr Javed Rizvi Conferred Sitara-e-Imtiaz

Dr Javed Haider Rizvi, Professor and Chair at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, AKU, was honoured with the Sitara-e-Imtiaz by the Government of Pakistan in March 2004.



The award was conferred upon Dr Rizvi for his contributions to work and research in assisted reproduction as well as undergraduate and postgraduate medical education. Dr Rizvi's forte lies in gynaecology, medical education and curriculum designing, and he has performed ground-breaking work in infertility. In the area of assisted reproductive technology, he has rendered invaluable service to the community by establishing the Concept Infertility Centre in Karachi.

Dr Rizvi is the second Pakistani, after Nobel laureate Professor Abdus Salam, to be conferred a Teaching Fellowship by the Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine in London. He earlier worked with the British Overseas Development Association in designing the medical curriculum for universities in Bangladesh and has been on the examining boards of medical institutions in Pakistan, Malaysia and the UK. With 36 scientific papers in international journals to his credit, as well as six chapters in books on Maternal Health and Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Dr Rizvi is a pioneer in his fields of expertise.

Dr Rizvi completed his postgraduate training from Oxford, Cambridge and London universities in the UK and was the first Pakistani consultant gynaecologist in that country. He is vice president of the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Society of Pakistan and a member of Rotunda Fertility Services' International Advisory Committee. He is also a member of the Asia Pacific Continence Advisory Board and Urogynaecology Committee of the Asian Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. ■

Researchers Unravel Genetics of High Blood Pressure

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► The ACE gene is involved in generating the active form of the hormone angiotensin II which plays a major role in the regulation of vascular tone and blood volume, the two key determinants of blood pressure. Drugs that inhibit the formation of angiotensin II by blocking ACE form a class of anti-hypertensive drugs known as ACE inhibitors and are often used in the treatment of essential hypertension.

One of the major problems associated with the treatment of hypertension is the lack of an effective determinant for which drugs should be used. The University's research into the ACE gene has resulted in the identification of a genetic marker for hypertension, which may be used as part of a genetic test for more specifically identifying patients who are likely to benefit

from ACE-inhibitor therapy. The work provides clues to the molecular mechanisms underlying hypertension and suggests that elevated ACE levels in people inheriting a particular variant of the gene may participate in the determination of an individual's genetic susceptibility to the disease.

The work was led by Professor Philippe Frossard, Director of the GMCD Group and Chair, Department of Biological and Biomedical Sciences (BBS) at AKU, and Dr Mohammad Saeed, Instructor in BBS, who is also Chief Coordinator of the GMCD Group and Director of this project. Other key scientists involved in the project were Dr Syed Osman Ali, Instructor in BBS, and Kausar Saboohi, Senior Technologist, BBS. The study was carried out in its entirety at AKU's state-of-the-art research laboratories. The GMCD Group is involved in further research endeavours to tease out the molecular and genetic architectures of cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension, stroke, diabetes and myocardial infarction, which are the leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide. ■

AKU-IED Assists Afghanistan in Developing Teacher Educators

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► It aims to have an impact on the development of the education system through capacity building programmes and activities for teachers and teacher educators in Afghanistan.

The primary mission of AKU is the development of quality human resources that are trained to respond to the unique needs of the developing world.

In a pioneering initiative, AKU-IED designed and conducted a 'Certificate in Education: Primary Education (Mentoring)' programme for Afghan teacher educators and others in the field

of education. The two-month programme, which attracted 24 participants, focused on developing mentors by improving pedagogical content knowledge as well as assessment, classroom management and reflective skills.

The course helped participants understand the critical issues in their personal and professional development, and enabled them to work on-the-job with teachers. It focused on the integration of social studies, science, language teaching and mathematics. Participants described it as "effective", noting that the "topics covered the needs of the master trainers, especially in the context of working in Afghanistan." ■



AKU-IED's course for Afghan teacher educators helped participants understand the critical issues in their personal and professional development. It also enabled them to work on-the-job with teachers to enhance pedagogical content knowledge as well as mentoring, assessment, classroom management and reflective skills.

Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine

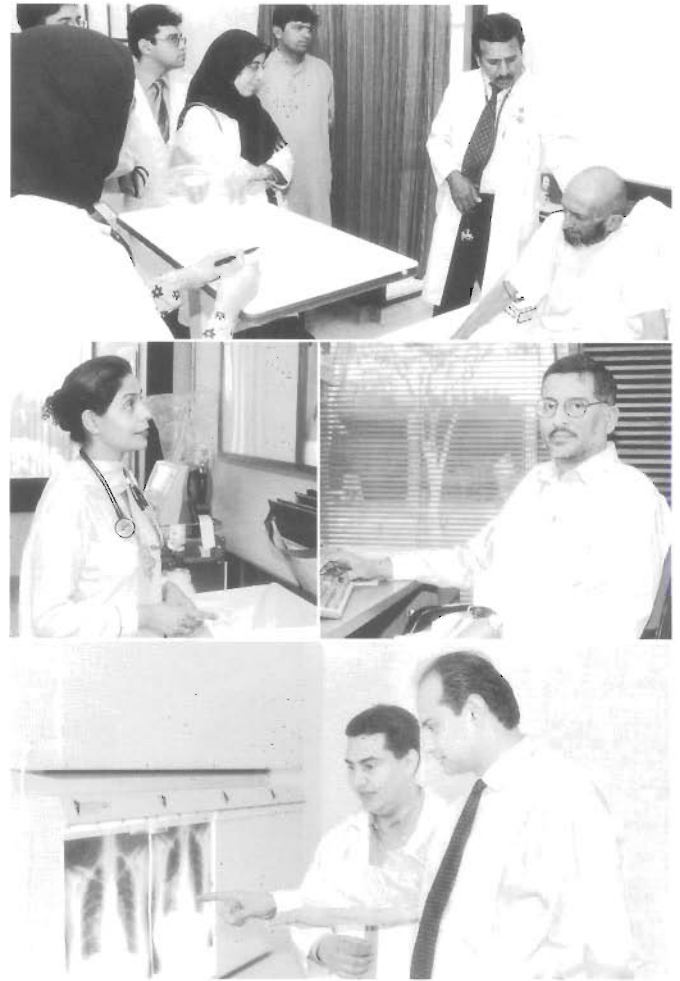
Setting High Standards in Clinical Care and Research

Pulmonary or lung diseases are a common cause of ill health and loss of life in the community. Developing countries like Pakistan have been hit hard by the rising prevalence of tuberculosis (TB), including multi-drug resistant TB, and smoking-induced lung diseases. There has also been a worldwide rise in the incidence of other pulmonary diseases such as allergy and asthma.

Other challenges faced by Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine include the management of respiratory failure patients who need ventilator therapy and/or Intensive Care Unit (ICU) admission. The task for the Pulmonary Section faculty in AKU's Department of Medicine is to provide cost-effective yet state-of-the-art treatment to a wide range of patients. Established in 1999, the Pulmonary Medicine Section is headed by Dr S. Fayyaz Hussain, Associate Professor, who leads a team of full-time faculty comprising Dr Javid Khan, Professor; Dr Nawal Salahuddin, Assistant Professor; Dr Javed Hussain, Assistant Professor; and Dr Ali Zuberi, Assistant Professor. Since July 2004, the Section has had a full-time staff of six with the addition of Dr Ahmed Suleman Haque, Assistant Professor, and four part-time faculty members. The service provides round-the-clock assessment and admission to patients from the Emergency Medicine Section. The Section also provides faculty cover to ICU for at least two weeks each month, and a prompt pulmonary consultation service for patients under the care of other services. Twenty-four pulmonary clinics are held every week at AKU with off-site clinics in Clifton and Karimabad. Dedicated asthma, allergy and smoking-cessation clinics also take place every week.

The pulmonary function laboratory provides a broad range of tests at AKUH, many of which are not available at other medical centres in Pakistan. In 2001, the Section played a key role in training two dedicated pulmonary technologists who are vital to maintaining standards, developing new techniques and increasing volume in the pulmonary function laboratory.

Nursing services provide high quality of patient care in pulmonary medicine. The Respiratory Special Care Unit, which started operations recently and provides modern non-invasive ventilation services, is another unique facility available only at AKUH. Regular workshops are held to train nurses and doctors in this new technique. Allergy testing and patient education is provided by nurses in the pulmonary clinics, where the bronchoscopy suite is equipped with video-bronchoscope facilities.



The Pulmonary Section's quest for improved patient care and treatment is supported by ongoing research activities and continuing medical education. The Section is a pioneer on many fronts and its expertise in non-invasive ventilation services is recognised nationally. AKU has been the leader in developing services for the diagnosis and management of sleep apnea and remains the only well-equipped referral centre in the country.

The Pulmonary Section is a pioneer on many fronts and its expertise in non-invasive ventilation services is recognised nationally. AKU has been the leader in developing services for the diagnosis and management of sleep apnea and remains the only well-equipped referral centre in the country. Increasing awareness of the harmful effects of tobacco on human health has, meanwhile, been at the forefront of public educational campaigns.

A three-year fellowship training programme was initiated in 1999 and is recognised by Postgraduate Medical Education and the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan. The Section has a busy commitment towards Continuous Medical Education activities within and outside AKU, which is evident through regular seminars and workshops. Faculty members have held key positions in the Pakistan Chest Society and represented AKU at various international forums. A strong educational programme has contributed towards understanding the risk factors associated with lung diseases and their management, and research relevant to pulmonary diseases in the community continues to be at the forefront of scholarly activities. Research grants have been received from WHO,

University Research Commission, Seed Money and pharmaceutical firms for research in TB, sleep apnea, pulmonary function and pulmonary infections. Students and junior doctors are encouraged to participate in research. Last year, a large number of research papers were presented in international conferences and accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals. This resulted in 11 research abstracts, 17 publications and one book chapter.

“All this has been possible through the support of a dedicated team of highly qualified faculty members who have helped the Pulmonary Section in keeping pace with new developments in the speciality,” says Dr S. Fayyaz Hussain, who attributes the success of the Section to encouragement offered by the University. “Over the coming years, new sub-speciality services will continue to evolve, maintaining the pioneering role of AKUH in Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine in Pakistan.” ■

AKUH Starts Clifton Medical Services

Established in January 2004, Clifton Medical Services is part of the Hospital's outreach programme that aims to provide accessible, compassionate and high-quality health care to patients residing in distant areas of Karachi. The facility, located behind the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, is testament to AKUH's rapid growth and its goal of providing the best possible options for diagnosis of disease and team management of patient care. AKUH now operates eight such off-site Integrated Medical Services units across Karachi.

“Building and commissioning the project was the easy part. Now comes the real work where we all have to pull together to meet, and even exceed, the needs and expectations of our customers,” says Sohail Habib, Administrator, Outpatient Services, AKUH.

Clifton Medical Services comprises Consulting Clinics that offer specialised outpatient consultation facilities ranging from Family Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynaecology and Paediatrics to Psychiatry, Medicine and Surgery. In addition, Urgent Care Services provide treatment for conditions that require prompt attention but do not pose an immediate or serious health threat. Patients with critical, serious or life-threatening illnesses or injuries should report directly to the Hospital's Emergency Medicine Section on Stadium Road. “I am thoroughly satisfied with the service provided at this centre. I hope the facility will continue to expand and soon include day care surgery,” comments a patient.

Pharmacy services are operated under the supervision of graduate pharmacists who provide comprehensive information related to drugs and their usage. All drugs are stored at a controlled temperature to maintain validity and efficacy. Pharmacy services can also prepare special drug formulations for patients if requested by their doctors. Radiology services (general radiography, orthopantomogram



Doctors and nurses attending to Urgent Care patients at Clifton Medical Services.

and ultrasound with colour doppler, small parts and endocavity probes) are provided under the supervision of qualified radiologists. For special procedures such as MRI, CT and Nuclear Medicine, the staff provides assistance in making appointments with AKUH's main facility on Stadium Road. The Centre also includes a Laboratory Specimen Collection Unit, which transports specimens to the main laboratory at AKUH in accordance with international standards for storage and transportation of pathological specimens. The Hospital's laboratory specimen facilities extend beyond Karachi with 52 collection units now operating throughout Pakistan. ■

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

August - October 2004

Programme	Date
Continuing Medical Education	
■ Common Dermatological Problems	Aug 24 - 26
■ Chest Pain	Sep 29 - 30
■ Diagnostic Medicine	Oct 11 - 13
'Signs, Symptoms and Care' Public Health Awareness Programme	
■ Cardiology	Aug 7
■ Urinary Incontinence	Sep 4
■ Cataract	Oct 2
Seminars and Conferences	
National Health Sciences Research Symposium	Sep 20 - 25

AKUH Holds AO Basic Skills Workshop on Fracture Management



Dr Riaz Hussain, Assistant Professor and Head of Orthopaedics (left), providing hands-on skills using artificial bones at the first AO workshop on fracture management.

AKUH's multidisciplinary approach to diagnosis and care ensures a continuum of safe and high-quality care for patients. As part of that approach, the University Hospital organised the first AO basic skills workshop in Pakistan in October 2003.

The course coordinator, Dr M. A. Wajid, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at AKUH, maintained that the workshop "forms an integral part of training of surgeons and will bring AKU postgraduate orthopaedic training in line with training programmes in the developed world." Training was carried out on artificial bones under the supervision of AO-trained

national and international trauma surgeons and the trainee-to-trainer ratio was one to two. One of the keynote speakers, Dr Mirza Rahman Beg, Orthopaedic Consultant, AKUH, described the course as mandatory training for junior surgeons.

The course concentrated on improving comprehension of common fractures. Three key methods were employed: comprehensive lectures concentrated on the understanding of core material, emphasising the scientific rationale for the advocated treatment; practical sessions helped in the application of AO principles; and video demonstrations supplemented one-to-one teaching on artificial bones.

"Since trauma is the leading cause of disability, we can reduce trauma-related disability in our population by properly training young surgeons. Such courses are vital in terms of achieving this goal," noted Dr Imtiaz Hashmi, Honorary Consultant, Section of Orthopaedics, AKUH.

"This is a step in the right direction and has long been the need of the local orthopaedic community. It is not within the means of every trainee to go abroad for such workshops," added Mansoor Jokhio, national representative of Mathys Medical Ltd., Switzerland, and the corporate organiser of the event. Such courses constitute a step towards enhanced quality of care, allowing continuous education of physicians and surgeons and improved treatment of patients. ■

Patient Welfare Programme Hospital Aids Shaheena



Shaheena, 55, was diabetic and had not been well since the morning. Her eldest daughter Raheela was worried about her mother's pallid appearance and asked her to rest while she prepared breakfast for the family. Raheela, incidentally, had discontinued her studies so she could help her mother in raising the family.

By afternoon, Shaheena was complaining of severe pain in the lower left side of her abdomen. Her son, a laboratory assistant earning Rs. 5,500 (US\$ 96.50) a month, frantically called his father. Shaheena was then taken to AKUH where doctors found that renal stones were obstructing her ureter. "Surgery is inevitable," the family was told.

With the help of relatives and friends, Shaheena's family managed to pool together Rs. 28,000 (US \$491) to meet the cost of treatment. Her uncontrolled diabetes resulted in complications and Shaheena had to undergo four urological procedures to remove the obstruction in her kidney. By then the cost of treatment had risen to Rs. 103,000 (US \$1,807). Staggering under the weight of this huge burden, the cash-strapped family sought help from AKUH. The Hospital's Patient Welfare Department intervened and offered Rs. 51,000 (US \$895), and also arranged for the remaining Rs. 24,000 (US \$421) through an anonymous donor.

A fully recovered Shaheena is now busy planning Raheela's wedding. ■

Approaches to Pluralism in Muslim Contexts

Public and Private Spaces: Can Muslims Negotiate Between the Two?

Diversity of humanity is a long recognised fact. Pluralism, however, is an attitude towards this fact. It entails not only the recognition of diversity but also an acceptance of its social and epistemological implications. It is therefore important that pluralism be analysed systematically in terms of philosophical strength, historical genealogy and social applicability.

To this end, Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC) initiated a series of seminars in 2003 on 'Approaches to Pluralism in Muslim Contexts.' Besides the heads and faculty members of various leading universities and research institutions, these seminars continue to attract a number of professionals and prominent members of the Muslim community in the UK.



Participants at the third seminar of the series titled 'Approaches to Pluralism in Muslim Contexts' discussed a wide range of ideas including the democratisation of communities, the concept of the secular, and distinction between religion and ethics.

This year's first seminar, the third in the series, was organised by AKU-ISMC in March in London. Titled 'Public and Private Spaces: Can Muslims Negotiate Between the Two?', the seminar was dedicated to exploring the notions of public and private spaces in Muslim contexts.

Keynote speaker Professor Akeel Bilgrami, Johnsonian Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, presented an insightful paper that covered a wide range of issues. Using Indian Muslims as a case study, Professor Bilgrami addressed the notion of minority and explored it from a psychological standpoint. He argued that the underlying psychological characteristics of minority – the sense of alienation and victimisation – are manifested amongst some Muslims' self-perception even in countries where Muslims are not a minority. The minority psychology, he proposed, is linked to two types of clashes to be found within Muslim societies. The first is a clash between what he called 'absolutists' and 'moderates'. He argued that the moderates, despite their majority, are unable to

critique and restrain the minority absolutist voice. This, in Professor Bilgrami's opinion, is due to the existence of another clash that is internal to the psychology of moderate Muslims themselves. He argued that most moderate Muslims are torn between their dislike for absolutism and their resentment of forces they see as alien and exploitative of Muslims. It is within the framework of this defence mechanism against external exploitative forces that moderate Muslims regard any critique of absolutists as a betrayal of fellow Muslims. In Professor Bilgrami's opinion, the exploitative forces – mainly the western hegemonic forces – were themselves a result of the weakening of democratic processes in the West.

Professor Bilgrami observed that the nature of public life in Muslim societies is closely linked to these two types of clashes. He argued that unless the clash internal to moderate Muslims is resolved – and this he saw as partly connected to democratic processes in the West – the majority moderate Muslims will not be in a position to critique the absolutists and the public sphere will continue to be dominated by the latter.

The second keynote speaker, Professor Sami Zubaida, Emeritus Professor of Politics and Sociology at University of London's Birkbeck College, approached issues of the public and private spheres from a historical standpoint. He argued that while notions of the public and the private existed in Muslim consciousness historically, their connotations differed from those present now. The bathhouses, markets, mosques, taverns and, particularly, coffee houses formed the centres of public life in Muslim societies for both the *khas* (elite) and *aam* (masses). People would gather in these places and engage in public discourse that was often censored by the authorities. In this regard, Professor Zubaida saw the coffee house, a place where the literati and artists gathered, as the institution closest to what we now regard as public space. The family was the private sphere par excellence, with its own nuances of public and private spaces.

With the spread of European modernity in Muslim societies, the notions of the public and private underwent a transformation. The driving forces of this transformation were the spread of literacy and printing which allowed the participation of the masses in public life, thus changing the very foundations of public life in Muslim societies. As European laws began to be applied to all aspects of life, with the exception of family and personal law in most cases, they too helped create a public secularised sphere. Professor Zubaida argued that the process of secularisation continued with the rise of independence ►

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Education Should Not Be Restricted to Reading, Writing and Reckoning

— Dr Muhammad Memon

Honesty, compassion, tolerance and commitment to the personal, professional and national cause. Over the years, these guiding principles have come to inspire Dr Muhammad Memon, Head of Programmes at AKU Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED).

After receiving his PhD in Education from University of Surrey in England, Dr Memon pursued specialisation at University of Sussex, also in England, and University of the Philippines, Manila. His areas of expertise include curriculum development and evaluation, staff development, educational planning, monitoring and evaluation, and educational leadership and management.

How do you assess your experience at AKU-IED?

I joined AKU-IED as an assistant professor in 1993 and was the first faculty member to receive the outstanding teacher award for teaching scholarship. My scholarly work at AKU-IED, and publications in national and international journals, resulted in promotion to a full professorial position in 2003. AKU is committed to developing a national faculty for leadership roles in education and over the last four years I have taken a lead role at the Institute, focusing on research and enhancement of knowledge and management skills. I have also developed several courses and programmes in this area both within and outside Pakistan. After serving as Coordinator of Professional Programmes, I eventually became Head of Programmes, dealing with Masters, Advanced Diploma and Certificate-level programmes. The team-learning culture at AKU-IED is both enjoyable and challenging.

What is your vision of education in Pakistan and how is AKU-IED contributing towards its realisation?

The traditional ‘quantity approach’ to education is concerned with increasing enrolment and achieving good results by meeting examination needs, whereas ‘quality education’ – as reflected in AKU-IED’s mission – deals with the physical, cognitive, intellectual, social and cultural, and moral and ethical development of children. Education should be a nurturing, empowering and caring process aimed at creating a culture of social harmony, equity and social justice in schools and society. Education should not be restricted to reading, writing and reckoning: it should also focus on personal, social, and moral and ethical transformation. I see education as a constructive and re-conceptualisation process through which we unlearn and relearn different kinds of experiences.

AKU-IED’s mandate includes the personal and professional transformation of teachers and others who are engaged in teaching



learning processes. This mandate is based on four underlying principles: access, equity, quality and effectiveness. The Institute’s programmes are embedded in the transformational philosophy of education which is realised through critical pedagogy and a critical reflective process. Teachers, teacher educators and educational managers are being developed as agents of social change. They are being enabled to develop a ‘critical mass’ in their schools or educational institutions. AKU-IED’s programmes have significantly raised awareness of the need to adopt alternative paradigms of education and development to promote creative and critical thinking among teachers and children. Teacher education plays a critical role in transforming education. In Pakistan, however, teacher education is still considered a ‘routine’ rather than a ‘creative’ professional activity. There is a need to professionalise teacher education by enhancing the status and quality of teachers and teacher educators.

Who are AKU-IED’s national and international partners in teacher education?

AKU-IED is currently operating in 10 countries including Pakistan. Partnerships with Oxford University and University of Toronto have played significant roles in developing our institutional capacity. The Institute has also developed linkages with Sheffield Hallam University, Brock University, Oslo College, University of Alberta and other institutions. Both nationally and internationally, AKU-IED is working with the public and private sectors, especially non-profit organisations and Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) systems, to build their institutional capacity. Over time, the Institute has been able to develop a sustainable rapport with federal, provincial and district level governments, and this has assisted in the development of national policies and plans.

What has been the impact of these programmes?

AKU-IED programmes have contributed substantially towards professionalising teacher education in selected school systems. It has introduced innovative ideas such as teachers as reflective practitioners, action researchers, social change agents and pedagogical leaders. Initiatives such as the Whole School

Improvement Programme in the Northern Areas of Pakistan and Field-Based Teacher Education have significantly impacted the quality of education in Pakistan as well as other countries. AKU-IED also introduced a new concept of professionalising teacher education by assigning the title of Professional Development Teachers (PDTs) to Masters graduates who work with teachers to provide professional support at the school level.

How is AKU-IED planning to further professionalise teacher education?

AKU-IED is already engaged in Professional Development Centre (PDC) type activities in East Africa which lead to a Certificate in Education in curriculum development and educa-

tional leadership and management. Taught by AKU-IED Masters graduates, these programmes substantially enhance teachers' sense of efficacy and professionalism. During and after professional development programmes, teachers share, discuss, reflect and critically analyse the challenges they face. This practice has led to the development of a community of reflective practitioners who work together to collectively solve problems.

In Afghanistan, AKU-IED is assisting the Ministry of Education in developing the education system by professionalising teachers and teacher educators. The Government of Syria has also requested the Institute's support in establishing PDC-type institutions. The objective of such innovative initiatives is to internationalise AKU-IED's approach to school improvement. ■

AKU-IED Working for Institutional Capacity Building in Sindh and Balochistan

The University's Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) is working as a national partner with the Government of Pakistan to build the institutional capacity of selected districts in Sindh and Balochistan. Funded by USAID, the partnership programme will bring within its scope Hyderabad, Thatta, Khairpur and Sukkur districts in Sindh, and the remote and underdeveloped Chaghai, Qilla Saifullah, Turbat and Gwadar districts in Balochistan.

The programme is a reaffirmation of the University's focus on the development of quality human resources to respond to the unique needs of developing regions through productive linkages and collaborations.

Under this programme, AKU-IED offers three Certificate in Education courses: Educational Leadership and Management for district education officers, additional district officers and supervisory personnel; Primary Education for supervisors, learning coordinators and senior primary school teachers; and Teacher Education for faculty of elementary colleges of education, colleges of education and Provincial Institutes of Teacher Education (PITE) in both Sindh and Balochistan.

The objective of the Educational Leadership programme is to develop pedagogical leaders who can improve the quality of education in their respective areas, whereas the focus of the Primary Education programme is on mentoring. Supervisors, learning coordinators and resource persons will be prepared through reflective practice and critical inquiry, and will ultimately apply their newly acquired knowledge to their respective schools. The Teacher Education programme, on the other hand, will help develop the competence of college and elementary college faculty.

Delivering his welcome address at an orientation programme, Dr Sadrudin Pardhan, Director of Outreach Activities, AKU-IED, apprised the participants of the Institute's role in improving the quality of education through research,



Education certificate courses will help participants acquire skills in management and leadership, enhancing their performance in the workplace as well as in the field.

professional development programmes and policy dialogues. He said AKU-IED is working with 10 countries and has considerable experience to share.

"It was time both the provincial and district governments worked together to improve the quality of education in the country through AKU-IED's innovative professional development programmes for teachers and educational officers," said Dr Noor-ul-Haq, Additional Secretary (Academic), Sindh Education Department.

Dr Muhammad Memon, Head of Programmes at AKU-IED, shared the Institute's plans and strategies for institutional capacity building of selected districts in Sindh and Balochistan. By August 2004, AKU-IED plans to conduct an MEd and a Cluster-Based Mentoring Programme for teacher educators. Some 1,200 teachers from Sindh and Balochistan are expected to enrol in the mentoring programme alone.

Praising the efforts of AKU-IED, a participant said that "the course has helped develop our professional skills and build our capacity to work in the office as well as in the field with a clear understanding of leadership and management." ■

AKUH Nursing Helps Enhance Syrian Health Care Systems



Orientation programmes consisted of both theory and practice, introducing participants to key components of AKUH systems and clinical areas.

The Nursing Division of AKUH has assumed a leadership position in defining the role of professional nursing in Pakistan and in creating a model of nursing excellence which may be emulated not only in the country but throughout the region. In pursuance of this philosophy, the Nursing Division has made an impact on several hospitals in Pakistan through continuous nursing education and quality initiatives. Such strategies are now benefiting Syrian hospitals as well.

A five-year work plan, developed jointly by Syria's Ministry of Health, AKDN and AKU, aims to improve the quality of nursing education and services at Syrian hospitals and nursing schools. It also entails a Nursing Quality Assurance Programme (NQAP) initiated in two Syrian hospitals, Hilal-e-Ahmer in Damascus and Al-Assad in Hama.

In this connection, AKU signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Syria in May 2004 to help improve the quality of nursing care and education in the

country. "Nurses are a vital component of any health care system. This investment in our country's resources is necessary if we are to sustain development," Dr M. Iyad Chatty, Syria's Minister for Health, said on the occasion. "We see AKU as a priority partner given the integrated nature of our joint programme which includes curriculum design, education and leadership development."

Earlier, a group of 14 Syrian nursing directors and two physicians visited the University Hospital in January 2004 to facilitate the implementation of NQAP and to prepare for crucial and diverse roles as physicians and nursing leaders. Orientation programmes for the visiting team were designed by the Nursing Education Services Department of AKUH Nursing Division. The programmes consisted of both theory and practical components to introduce the participants to AKUH systems of patient care management, organisational structure, staff development and management, quality assurance, patient family education and patient complaint handling. Participants also received two weeks of exposure to clinical areas.

At the conclusion of the programmes, Syrian nurses highlighted the specific areas in which they benefited and foresaw how the education imparted to them at AKU would assist them in the workplace. The visiting group also identified some key problems in Syrian health care delivery systems, including the absence of organisational structures, documentation, clinical policies, and procedures and standards. Lack of opportunities for continuous education in nursing and a shortage of patient safety and security systems were also cited as problem areas.

This initiative is expected to help the Government of Syria in launching pragmatic programmes aimed at enhancing health care settings at the national level by determining the actual health care needs of the country's population. Simultaneously, AKUH Nursing Division aims to expand its own capacity to meet the current and future needs of Syrian health care systems through new collaborations and partnerships. The initiative is an integral part of AKU's primary mission of developing quality human resources that are trained to respond to the unique needs of the developing world. ■

Approaches to Pluralism in Muslim Contexts

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► movements and also in the post-colonial period with its emphasis on industrial growth and modernisation. Professor Zubaida stated that in the last few decades, the process appears to have reversed with the growth of 'absolutist' movements in Muslim societies. The distinction between the public and the private came under attack as laws pertaining to dress, food, marriage and other behaviour began to encroach upon private spheres in some Muslim societies. However, the appearance of de-secularisation masks deeper secularisation processes that continue to exist.

Professor Zubaida cited the example of Iran where roughly 70 per cent of the population is under 30 and continues to defy and

challenge the imposition of state and religious decrees in the private sphere. He concluded on an optimistic note, arguing that the rise of absolutism has not managed to alter shifts toward secularisation.

Earlier in his welcome address, Dr Abdou Filali-Ansary, Director of AKU-ISMC, outlined the work of the Institute, particularly its goal of bringing together scholars from various disciplines for meaningful intellectual encounters. Established in 2002, AKU-ISMC's goal is to strengthen research and teaching on the heritage of Muslim societies in all its historic diversity. ■