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Winter 1-1-2023

## INSPIRE : Vol 6, Issue 1

Department of Medicine

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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

*inspire*

Innovation, Service & Patient -  
Centered Research & Education

*Department of Medicine*

*Volume 6 | Issue 1*

## ***Message from the Chair***

Dear Colleagues,

I am sure most of you have decided on some wise New Year's resolutions. This year I have some too, of which Self-care is on the top of the list and I believe should be for you too.

The last two years did put most of us through the wringer and so it is very much a good idea to start investing in our overall health. Whether that self-care includes getting in at least 7000 steps a day, following a reading list (I have prepared a book list for myself), good sleep hygiene, less screen time, and getting a regular check up by a physician! I am grateful to come up with a list like that and hope to stick to it.

Self-care also includes investing in continuous learning and on that note there are two very exciting conferences coming up. These include the annual Pulse and the first Health Data Science Conference. I would encourage you all to register for those when you see the announcements come through.

A very Happy New Year to all of you! I hope this year brings us all collective joy, peace, health, and a great deal of contentment.

Zainab

## ***Medicine at National and International Forums***

### ***AKUPI NCD Symposium***





The global crisis of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is extraordinary; in low-middle income countries (LMIC) more than three-quarters and around 82% of premature NCD-related deaths occur. According to the WHO, in Pakistan, NCDs are the top 10 causes of morbidity and mortality and are not equipped to manage this epidemic. In most LMICs, locally relevant and high-quality data on NCDs are inadequate, which is a cause of a critical gap in the response to the NCD epidemic. To overcome the gaps, an understanding of the prevalence, and risk factors, and the development and testing of safe, effective, and low-cost solutions are required through trained researchers in this area. With the aim to address this dearth and directly increase Pakistan's research capacity, the AKUPI-NCDs Research Training Program was launched in late 2021. In December 2022, the AKUPI NCD Research symposium: the landscape of research in Pakistan was organized by the Department of Medicine supported by the Fogarty International Center, National Institutes of Health, and the USA. Experts from AKU, Dr. Zainab Samad, Chair & Professor Department of Medicine, Aga Khan University, declared the conference opening along with welcome remarks by Dr. Adil Haider, Dean Medical College, Aga Khan University.

Dr. Zia ul Haq, Vice Chancellor of Khyber Medical University Peshawar provided the Chief Guest. The event highlighted national & international field experts as speakers & panelists, who encouraged dialogues for the promotion of a conducive atmosphere for NCDs research in the country. To prioritize NCDs research, efforts should be made for the formation of collaborative research networking at local, national & international levels. Symposium participants also included Dr. Gerald Bloomfield, Associate Professor of Medicine & Global Health, at Global Health Institute, Duke University, USA, who shared his experience of NCDs research methodology. Dr. Bashir Hanif, Executive & Medical Director, Tabba Heart Institute, Karachi gave a brief intro on the PAK-SEHAT study; Ms. Mishalle Afzal, Gallup Pakistan, Islamabad shared insights on NCDs from Gallup surveys. Cardiovascular disease & the Health Insurance program was discussed by Dr. Khalid Rehman, Assistant Professor of Public Health, at Khyber Medical University, Peshawar. Dr. Faisal Khan from Precision Medical Lab, National Center for Big Data & Cloud Computing, CECOS & RMI, Swat & Peshawar led a session on oral cancer and multiomes. Diabetes & Mental Health as NCD in Pakistan was discussed by Dr. Zohaib Khan Director-office of research innovation & commercialization, Khyber Medical University, Peshawar & Dr. Saima Aleem, Institute of Public Health & Social Sciences, Khyber Medical University, Peshawar. Panel discussions on

Climate Change and NCDs and the Role of media in NCD awareness were led by Dr Sameen Siddiqui and Dr Ayeesha Kamal and included distinguished panelists such as Professors Abdul Hakeem, Sabha Bhatti, Mr Bilal Gilani and Ms Zofeen Ebrahim. Dr Wasay led a panel discussion on barriers & facilitators to research funding in LMICs and panelists included Professor Salim Virani and Major General Aamir Ikram. The symposium ended with poster award distribution along with concluding remarks by Dr. Aysha Almas, Associate Professor, Medicine, at Aga Khan University.



AKUPI NCD symposium ended with Gala Dinner and a networking event. Guests were offered cultural Sindhi Ajrak and cap. A fun networking activity was conducted by Barbara Dcruz and staff colleagues. All the members present enjoyed the Live music and scrumptious dinner.



***Congratulations!***

***Dr. Syed Ahsan Ali***  
*on achieving*

***Membership***  
*to the*  
***Haile T. Debas Teachers' Academy, AKU!***

## *Annual Appreciation Event 2022*



Department of Medicine has been regularly organizing Annual Appreciation Evening since the many past years. This time the in-person event was done after three years due to COVID restrictions. It was held on December 9th at the Sports and Rehabilitation centre AKUH. The organizing team included Dr. Faisal Ismail, Dr. Sadia Masood, and Dr. Zahrah Khan along with the admin team. It was a fun-filled night and people cheered together after a long time in a close and warm gathering. Residents played a very important role in the success of this event. They played many skits and gave tribute to their graduating class. A skit named "Koun banay ga Khushkismati" was particularly hilarious and was well-appreciated and enjoyed by everyone. Different categories of awards were distributed among faculty members, administrative staff, residents, and fellows to appreciate their hard work, dedication, and resilience. The department also recognized the efforts of our leading senior faculty who have had a huge contribution towards the growth of the Department of Medicine and who retired recently, these included Professor Muhammad Ishaque, Prof Ata Khan, and Prof Naseem Salahuddin. The event was enjoyable, eliciting waves of laughter and sweet memories for everyone.

## *Dr Bloomfield's AKU visit*



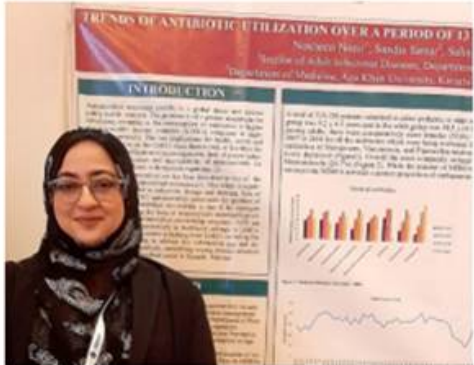
Dr Bloomfield is an Associate Professor with Tenure, Medicine & Associate Professor Global Health and the Principal collaborator from Duke University on the AKUPI NCD Research Training Program. He attended the AKUPI NCD symposium, met with faculty members at AKUH, AKU students, toured the AKU campus and also visited Pediatric research field site at Bhains Colony. Finally he was able to visit NICVD where several AKU alumni are managing the excessive cardiovascular disease burden.



***Congratulations!***

***Dr. Sadia Masood***  
on achieving

***Membership***  
to the  
***Haile T. Debas Teachers’  
Academy, AKU!***



Dr. Nosheen Nasir, Assistant Professor in the section of Adult Infectious Diseases recently attended International Congress on Infectious Diseases in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 17th to 20th November where she presented two posters of her research work on antibiotic stewardship and COVID-19 therapeutics.

***Neurology | 22nd Annual Update Conference***





The AKU neurology faculty attended the 22nd annual update conference organized by the Pakistan Society of Neurology in Faisalabad. The faculty members were invited as speakers and three of our faculty members were awarded life-time achievement awards for services rendered in the field of Neurology in Pakistan. Congrats!

### **PADCON | 41st Conference**



AKU Team Dermatology actively participated in the 41st conference of the Pakistan Association of Dermatologists held in Karachi. Dr. Saadia Tabassum was the chairperson of the scientific committee. Dr. Shaheen Naveed and Dr. Sadia Masood presented their papers and were part of the expert panelists. Dermatology residents Dr. Rimsha Baig and Dr. Tazein Amber also participated actively in the paper presentation and assisted in moderating the sessions.



***Congratulations!***  
***Dr. Nida Saddaf Khan***  
*on the successful completion of*  
***PhD!***

### **Neurology Annual Appreciation Evening**



The year 2022 ended with appreciation and gratitude. One of these events was organized by the Neurology section. Faculty members, residents




and staff were present to mark the occasion. It was well attended and an enjoyable evening highlighted by the musically inclined and vocally gifted Neurology faculty.


## ***Nephrology | Mock TOACS Exam***



The Section of Nephrology organized a mock TOACS exam for trainees on Dec 14th, 2022 at CIME. The stations included case scenarios, data interpretation, histopathology and performance of procedural skills and they were developed in accordance with CPSP clinical exam format. Apart from the full-time faculty at the section, two external examiners attended the mock exam as well. The activity was well received and appreciated by the trainees.



**Tobacco Cessation Skills Building Workshop for Healthcare Professionals: A Step to Curb Non-Communicable Diseases**  
(ONLINE WORKSHOP)



Healthy Lungs      Smoker's Lungs

<p><b>Learning Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tobacco control challenges</li> <li>Health hazards of tobacco</li> <li>Barriers to quitting tobacco</li> <li>Pharmacotherapy of tobacco cessation</li> <li>Tobacco cessation advocacy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Facilitators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professor Javaid Ahmed Khan</li> <li>Professor Muhammad Irfan</li> <li>Dr. Taiha Shahzad</li> </ul>
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Dr Sara Khan was invited as the chief guest at an event organized by MA Ayesha memorial center at the NED university to recognize the International



Prof Javaid Ahmed Khan along with Prof M Irfan and Dr Talha Shahzad conducted an online workshop on the topic “Tobacco cessation skills building workshop for Healthcare professionals: A step to curb Non-communicable diseases”. It was a well delivered and a highly interactive session.

day for Persons with Disabilities. The event was well attended by patients with chronic neurological disorders who are all striving hard to improve accessibility to persons with disabilities in Pakistan. The event also show-cased different contraptions and appliances created by the engineers at NED university to help people with different kinds of disabilities.

## You tube session

**Winter Skin Issues and Solutions**

Ask and learn from our Skin Experts about treatment options for skin problems in winters.



**Dr. Sadia Masood**  
Consultant Dermatologist



**Dr. Saadia Tabassum**  
Consultant Dermatologist



**Dr. Shaheen Naveed**  
Consultant Dermatologist



**Dr. Saadat Shah**  
Consultant Dermatologist

During the winter time, cold, dry air can easily irritate the skin. Team dermatology arranged Facebook and Youtube sessions to increase awareness about such skin issues and discussed several ways to combat the causes of dry winter skin and keep the skin smooth and supple all season long. The sessions were viewed well and received an overwhelming response.

### EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE



**SYED HASAN**  
SENIOR ASSISTANT

*RELIABLE AND DEPENDABLE*

*Syed Hasan is a positive person who is willing to go out of his way to get the work done.!*

*-Dr Saadia Farooqui – Senior Manager*



**NADIA SARWAR**  
HEAD NURSE

*PRECIOUS*

*You are a valued member of our team. Thank you for being the amazing Head Nurse .*

*-Farzana Irfan - Nurse Manager*



**SHUMAILA KHADIM ALI**  
NURSING STAFF

*EMPATHY*

*We are honored to have a dedicated, kind, and empathetic front liner among us! Thank you*

*-Farzana Irfan - Nurse Manager*



**Featured Faculty: Dr. Zarmeen Nasim | Senior Instructor | Data Science Team**

*“...Be honest with your work. Whatever you are doing in life, be loyal and committed...”*

**Please specify your field and what made you pick this field as your calling in life? Any experience to be specific.**

I am an academic person teaching and research in parallel. The reason behind selecting teaching as my career is that it allows you to impart knowledge in the most effective way.

**What are your hobbies/interests?**

I enjoy reading and painting in my leisure time.

**What made you choose AKU?**

AKU is well known for its healthcare services and research in medicine. My career objective of doing impactful research that has a social value closely correlates with the focus of AKU. This made me choose AKU over other organizations.

**In what profession would you have been if you were not in the current one?**

If I am not in academia, I would probably be an artist.

**What advice would you like to give to your juniors?**

One piece of advice that I would like to give to my juniors is that: Be honest with your work. Whatever you are doing in life, be loyal and committed.

**What lessons have you learned from your seniors?**

I find myself very lucky to have supportive seniors and great mentors. I have learnt a lot of things from my seniors. Few key lessons include commitment, dedication, decision making and priority management.

**What in your opinion is your biggest accomplishment; 1 personal and 1 professional?**

My most recent accomplishment in life is the successful completion of my doctoral studies. In 2022, I earned a PhD in Computer Science from Institute of Business Administration (IBA). My PhD journey was full of challenges and difficulties. But thanks to Almighty Allah and my family, that I have been able to complete my journey in due time.

**Tell us about 1 challenge/failure that taught you a lot in life.**

I remember that it was a bit hard time for me to continue my doctoral studies after the birth of my son. It was quite stressful to manage studies and teaching with my newborn. At that time, I started thinking about quitting my career. However, I find myself lucky to get great support from my husband and supervisor, who encouraged me to keep going.

**Who/what do you draw your inspiration from (your muse if you may) and why?**

My key source of inspiration in life are my parents. The way they brought up their girls to be independent in our male dominated society is something that inspires me a lot.

**What are your future goals?**

My target in life is to utilize my intellectual capability and technical skills in impactful activities that can serve society at large. In the long run, my focus would be on doing projects that are using Artificial intelligence for social good.

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## ***What are Academics Around the World Reading This Month?***

[Global emerging Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2: Impacts, challenges and strategies](#)

[COVID-19 Symptoms by Variant Period in the North Carolina COVID-19 Community Research Partnership, North Carolina, USA](#)

## ***Publications***

**Opportunities and challenges to non-communicable disease (NCD) research and training in Pakistan: a qualitative study from Pakistan**

Aysha Almas, Safia Awan, Gerald Bloomfield , Muhammad Imran Nisar, Sameen Siddiqi, Asma Ahmed, Asad Ali, Saad Hameed Shafqat, Zulfiqar Ahmed Bhutta, Daniel Benjamin Mark, Pamela Douglas, John Bartlett, Tazeen H Jafar, Zainab Samad

In BMJ Open. 2022 Dec 19;12(12):e066460.

Factors predicting mortality among patients with COVID-19 associated hospital acquired pneumonia: Insights from a tertiary care center

Nabila Kanwal, Humza Thobani , Ainan Arshad , Priya Ashok Kumar, Fatima Amjad, Safia Awan, Muhammad Irfan  
In Monaldi Arch Chest Dis. 2022 Dec 14.

Tuberculosis and diabetes mellitus: Relating immune impact of co-morbidity with challenges in disease management in high burden countries.

Abbas U, Masood KI, Khan A, Irfan M, Saifullah N, Jamil B, Hasan Z.  
In J Clin Tuberc Other Mycobact Dis. 2022 Nov 29;29:100343.

Predictors of Mortality and Functional Outcome in Pregnancy and Puerperium-Related Cerebral Venous Thrombosis

Maria Khan, Antonio Arauz, Derya Uluduz, Miguel A Barboza, Taskin Duman, Vanessa Cano-Ningenda, Safia Awan, Mohammad Wasay; Venost Study Group  
In Cerebrovasc Dis. 2022 Dec 23:1-8.

Diagnostic accuracy of artificial intelligence for detecting gastrointestinal luminal pathologies: A systematic review and meta-analysis.

Parkash O, Siddiqui ATS, Jiwani U, Rind F, Padhani ZA, Rizvi A, Hoodbhoy Z, Das JK.  
In Front Med (Lausanne). 2022 Nov 4;9:1018937.

Clinical characteristics, outcomes, and factors associated with mortality in Nocardia pneumonia: 18 years' real-world data from a tertiary care hospital in Karachi, Pakistan

Yasmin Rahim, Jaffar Khan, Shayan Shahid, Safia Awan, Muhammad Irfan  
In Respir Investig. 2022 Dec 18:S2212-5345(22)00155-1.

Safety of sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 inhibitors (SGLT2i) during the month of Ramadan in patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus in Pakistani population-an observational study from a tertiary care center in Karachi.

Sheikh A, Das B, Sattar S, Islam N.  
In Endocrine. 2022 Dec 29:1-7.

Assessment during Covid-19: quality assurance of an online open book formative examination for undergraduate medical students.

Rehman J, Ali R, Afzal A, Shakil S, Sultan AS, Idrees R, Fatima SS.  
In BMC Med Educ. 2022 Nov 15;22(1):792.

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## Upcoming Events



- Opportunities for networking and collaboration
- Lively debates about controversies in clinical care
- Research discussions
- Oral and Poster presentations

## save the date

February 24-26, 2023

For queries

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## HD4 Pakistan | Health Data Science Conference

### Conference Highlights:

- National and international field experts as speakers and panelists
- Workshops and poster presentations
- Opportunities for networking and collaboration
- Award for pitches on data science ideas for health impact
- Engaging research discussions

## Save the Date

March 2-4, 2023



**We welcome submissions to Inspire. Write to [barbara.dacruz@aku.edu](mailto:barbara.dacruz@aku.edu)**

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