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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Newsletter



OCTOBER 2002

VOL 3, NO.2

AKU Accredited in Kenya and Tanzania

AKU reached a milestone in July 2002, when it received accreditation instruments in Kenya and Tanzania, enabling the University to implement its academic programmes. The granting of the Letter of Interim Authority in Kenya and the Certificate of Provisional Registration in Tanzania reaffirmed these countries' confidence in the University's ability to introduce educational programmes for human resource capacity building in the health and education sectors.

His Highness the Aga Khan, Chancellor of AKU, was presented with the Letter of Interim Authority by Dr. Davy Koech, Chairman of Kenya's Commission on Higher Education. Dr. Koech assured AKU of the Commission's "necessary guidance and support in order to achieve the desired goal of quality university education." He also congratulated AKU for "this realisation of a long and challenging journey towards establishing a unique programme in nursing in Kenya." His Excellency President Moi, chief guest at the presentation ceremony, expressed his gratitude to the Chancellor for his willingness to invest in Kenya and said that the University's initial emphasis on nursing was in line with his country's



At the Letter of Interim Authority presentation ceremony in Kenya, L to R: Dr. Grace Miller, Regional Director, Advanced Nursing Studies programme, giving the welcome address on behalf of AKU President, Shams Kassim-Lakha; Noreen Kassam, Chairperson, Aga Khan Foundation (Kenya); Dr. Davy Koech, Chairman of the Commission on Higher Education, Kenya; His Highness the Aga Khan, Chancellor of AKU; and His Excellency Daniel Arap Moi, President, Republic of Kenya.

desire to promote the sciences. He also highlighted the critical role played by private universities, such as AKU, for the development of human resources in Kenya.

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Landmark Graduation Ceremony in Uganda

At a ceremony held on 18 September 2002 in Kampala, Uganda, 57 graduates of AKU received their degrees, diplomas and certificates at the University's first graduation ceremony outside Pakistan. AKU is Pakistan's first private university with a mandate to provide relevant high quality educational, research and service programmes both

nationally and internationally, and launched courses in Uganda in teacher education in 2000 and Advanced Nursing Studies in 2001. The ceremony crystallised the vision of the Chancellor, His Highness the Aga Khan, who speaking at AKU convocation ceremony in Karachi in 2000, had said, "The establishment of the Advanced Nursing Studies programme in East Africa... will give life to the University as a Pakistani institution with an international mandate, reaching out as an expression of Pakistan into the international community."

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Margaret Mukobe receiving her Master of Education (Teacher Education) degree from Shams Kassim-Lakha, President, AKU, at the graduation ceremony in Uganda.

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Experts Call for Urgent Attention to Early Childhood Care for National Development

AKU has long recognised the importance of human development as a key ingredient for economic growth and long-term sustainability. Being problem-oriented in its approach, the University has also identified the impact of the early years in a child's life to his or her future physical, mental and social development.

The theme for AKU's eighth annual National Health Sciences Research Symposium held in September 2002, was therefore "Early Childhood Care and Development – Best Investment for the Future." The two-day event, with an attendance of over 500 participants, provided a forum for discussion between the public and private sectors, international agencies and other key stakeholders to create awareness, share knowledge and establish strategies to effectively address this challenge.

At the inaugural session, His Excellency Mohammedmian Soomro, Governor of Sindh, reinforced that the Symposium's subject was of "vital interest to the people of Pakistan and the entire developing world." He highlighted that "Our children constitute a most underprivileged and destitute constituency." Underscoring the need for the government, universities and NGOs to collaborate in "the interests of our nation's children, its future citizens and its future leaders," Governor Soomro said that "Nations that neglect early childhood development are left to suffer the consequences."

Ambassador Saidullah Khan Dehlavi, Chairman, Board of Trustees of AKU, emphasised that AKU, being a research-based and community-oriented institution, stressed the importance of early childhood development with respect to health, learning and behaviour, as this period laid the foundation for the future development of the child. Also highlighting the subject's significance for this year's Symposium, Dr. Robert Baker, Provost, AKU, said, "Early childhood endeavours will benefit most from a strategy which acknowledges that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts." He also highlighted the current steps being undertaken by the University in the planning of the Institute of Human Development, identified in the Chancellor's Commission Report, which outlined the future vision of AKU. It would initially focus on the unborn child and the first three years, addressing Early Childhood Care and Development from an interdisciplinary perspective.

The Symposium included lectures from speakers of international repute. Dr. J. Fraser Mustard of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, gave the keynote lecture. Discussing the effects of early childhood development on learning, behaviour and health, Dr. Mustard, who is also a Founding Trustee of AKU, said, "There is a growing body of evidence that brain development in the early years influences performance in the formal school system and the level of education attained." Dr. Jim Irvine, Planning Coordinator, Human Development Programme, AKU, said countries that invested in more comprehensive basic education and health care provisions for adults, especially women, and in the care and

overall development of infants and young children, were more likely to have this investment returned in a more productive and effective workforce contributing to national development. Professor Zulfiqar Bhutta, Consultant Paediatrician, AKU, and Dr. Mushtaq A. Khan, Director, Centre for Research on Poverty Reduction and Income Distribution, Islamabad, spoke on aspects of malnutrition of the mother and child. According to the National Nutrition Survey, Dr. Mushtaq said, "10-15 per cent of pre-schoolers suffer from moderate to severe malnutrition while 40 per cent are underweight." Timely measures, including investment in nutrition, could reduce the incidence significantly, with palpable effects on reduction in



Dr. J. Fraser Mustard from the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, and a Founding Trustee of AKU, discussing the effects of early childhood development on learning, behaviour and health at the Symposium on Early Childhood Care and Development.

poverty. Professor Bhutta also noted that "Malnutrition during pregnancy and its consequences stand to maximally affect the health and longevity of the population."

The inaugural session was followed by scientific sessions and workshops, during which participants presented research papers on the Symposium's three central themes of brain development, health economics and psychosocial aspects related to childhood care. Speakers addressed a variety of issues including nutrition, child mental health and socio-economic and environmental determinants of child care. There were also three very well attended concurrent workshops on the key themes, with ensuing recommendations presented in the concluding session.

Among the recommendations emanating from the Symposium were the need for greater political awareness and renewed commitment to early childhood health and education in Pakistan. The Symposium also stressed the need for integrating Early Childhood Care and Development initiatives and education through the legislative framework of a future Ministry of Human Development. It was recommended that this should be complemented by funding and support networks rooted in the community, providing measurable outcomes. ■

Tawana: Targeting Female Literacy and Nutrition

The stark realities of low enrolment figures in government primary schools in Pakistan's rural areas and unrelenting malnutrition continue unabated. Their impact on the country's female population is particularly detrimental, and of serious concern for the present and future development of the country. To address these key issues, the Ministry of Women Development, Social Welfare and Special Education (MoWD), Government of Pakistan, launched "Tawana Pakistan" in September 2002. At the request of the government, the Department of Community Health Sciences (CHS), AKU, is taking the lead in managing the implementation of this project in collaboration with the MoWD, Pakistan Baitul Mal (PBM) and NGOs. Over a four-year period, the project will target 500,000 girls of primary school age (5-12 years old) in 5,000 government primary schools in 28 districts in the four provinces of the country. Tawana is the largest project in the history of AKU in terms of scale and financial support, with an overall budget of Rs. 3.6 billion (US\$ 64 million).

The project is a result of the success of the seven-year School Nutrition Programme, designed by CHS for the Government of Sindh. As the progenitor of Tawana, lessons learnt from the programme will bring invaluable know-how to the implementation and monitoring of its successor. The School Nutrition Programme engendered numerous positive outcomes. These included an increase in school enrolment and attendance, better health indicators, increased community interaction to promote the needs of the children and the mobilisation of women, who proved to be active and vocal stakeholders.

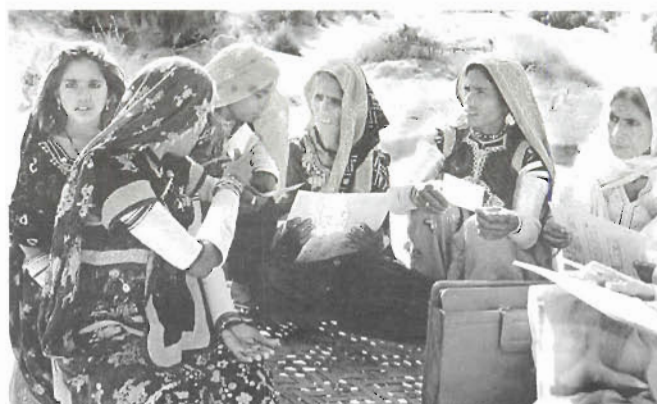
Tawana carries the School Nutrition Programme's ethos a step further by seeking to reduce social and gender inequalities in deprived areas. Its focus on girls from poor rural areas in the spheres of nutrition and education aims to provide them with an opportunity to improve not only their quality of life but also that of future generations. Malnourishment in girls can lead to stunting, which contributes to obstetric complications during pregnancy and low birth weight babies. The project endeavours to address this in each target school by providing a meal a day to each student, twice-weekly micronutrient supplements, biannual de-worming and growth monitoring every three months.

Tawana also aims to address the overall bleak picture of female literacy and primary education by increasing enrolment and sustaining attendance as well as providing access to those girls in the villages who do not attend school. Studies demonstrate that children from households in which the women are illiterate are 60 per cent more likely to be stunted and wasted, compared to households where at least one female member has passed class 10, the equivalent to grade nine in North America.

At the grass roots level, the programme will potentially give women a strong platform to implement change. Activities for planning and managing the feeding programme at the village level will be undertaken by Tawana Nutrition Committee and female Community Organisers. From this community level, 10,000 women will eventually be trained, along with around 120 female Field Workers, contributing to human resource development in Pakistan.

The goal of improving nutritional and educational status and access for the target female population underscores AKU's commitment to not only positively impacting impoverished communities but also uplifting the status of women. This collaboration between local communities, governmental and non-governmental organisations is therefore an important investment in the future of the country. ■

Nara MCH Centre – An Example of Public-Private Partnership



Nara MCH Centre was established in response to a critical need for maternal care in an area deprived of health care facilities for females.

The Government of Pakistan recently called on medical colleges to become involved in developing rural health care within their scope of responsibility. AKU, through its Department of Community Health Sciences (CHS) has fostered such developments in rural Sindh for several years.

The Nara Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Centre was set up in June 1999 by the Rural Community Development Project (RCDP) of CHS. RCDP itself has been running for about six years. The Nara MCH Centre was established in response to a critical need for maternal care in an area where there were previously no health care facilities for females. Popularly known for its wildlife and hunting, the Nara area is the largest tehsil (the administrative division of a district) of Khairpur and at the same time one of the remotest and most under-developed areas of Sindh. Providing health care in these deprived surroundings has not been an easy task. However, in a short time, the Centre has succeeded in becoming the focal point of reproductive health services for the entire area of Nara and much of the bordering Tharparkar desert.

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Dr. Sheikh Arshad Saeed—Teacher, Innovator and Researcher

Dr. Sheikh Arshad Saeed, the Abdulaziz Hussainali Shariff Professor of Pharmacology, Department of Biological and Biomedical Sciences, has not only been a faculty member at AKU for almost two decades, but also a researcher and innovator in his field. Dr. Saeed has been involved in breakthrough discoveries for nearly three decades, contributing to a better understanding of inflammation and anti-inflammatory drugs, reproductive biology and molecular mechanisms of human platelet aggregation. He has published 220 research papers and has the unusual distinction of being awarded nine patents from Europe and North America. In 1980, he was the first Pakistani to be elected Fellow of the Royal Institute of Biology. In 2001 he was awarded one of the nation's highest civil honours, the Hilal-i-Imtiaz for biological sciences – a first in Pakistan.



Why did you decide to pursue a career in medicine and specialise in anti-inflammatory drugs?

Although there are no doctors in my family, I always had a keen interest in the science of drugs. My scientific career started in biochemistry and pharmacology, and I found myself working in research and development for a German pharmaceutical company by the late 1960s. There I designed a large scale preparative electrophoresis apparatus for carrying out the separation of human blood proteins and enzymes. This motivated me to get involved in my main area of interest, anti-inflammatory drugs. It was also the first of the nine patents I hold for medical procedures, techniques and instruments granted in the US and Europe.

What is the relevance and impact of your breakthrough discoveries in the area of biological sciences for both Pakistan and abroad?

My main contribution to the biological sciences was the discovery that human blood contains a natural mechanism for controlling inflammation. The process started when I discovered that certain components in human blood, called Endogenous Inhibitors of Prostaglandin Synthesis (EIPS), could slow down the formation of "prostaglandin". This is one

of a group of hormone-like substances present in a wide variety of tissues and body fluids, such as the uterus, brain and kidney. Increased levels of prostaglandin cause inflammation as well as other undesirable responses, such as diarrhoea, vomiting, coughing and pain. EIPS is assumed to be the natural regulator and inhibitor of prostaglandin activity.

This work furthered my research in the area of control of human pregnancy and childbirth. While working at the University of Texas Health Science Centre in Dallas, I found that prostaglandins which in fact initiate labour were inhibited throughout pregnancy. However, EIPS had high activity rates throughout pregnancy but disappeared completely at the start of labour. During labour, the reduction of EIPS in amniotic fluid results in an increase of prostaglandins and is associated with the start of uterine contractions. This provided a major breakthrough in understanding the mechanisms of human labour and had important implications in the better understanding and treatment of preterm labour, pregnancy induced hypertension and spontaneous abortion.

This single discovery of an endogenous control mechanism for inflammation was a major advancement in the biological sciences and has led to the development of new anti-inflammatory drugs and the control of prostaglandins, the most important mediators of inflammation.

After joining AKU, I started work on human platelet aggregation and discovered the presence of another endogenous inhibitor of platelet aggregation in human blood, different from EIPS. This substance was found to control thrombosis leading to heart attacks.

My research work has therefore had a significant impact in the understanding and pathophysiology in prostaglandin and leukotriene mediated disorders like asthma, rheumatoid arthritis and peptic ulcers.

What is the state of research and innovation in the health sciences in the developing world today?

Scientific productivity in the developing world has been on the low side, but this is not necessarily due to a dearth of scientists. I would, however, say that a lack of an enabling environment for research and innovation is the key factor rather than the lack of trained talent. Pakistani scientists working abroad are doing good research with their host colleagues. Clearly, we have the potential to excel provided we are furnished with an enabling environment based on merit.

I also think that even if we do use knowledge and techniques from other parts of the world, they still need to be adapted to fit our local context. Unless there are those equipped to understand and apply new knowledge, its transfer is no good. For that reason, AKU is also committed to excellence in instruction to produce quality graduates able to contribute towards improving the health services in Pakistan and who understand technological advances in science.

How far has AKU fostered an enabling environment for research generally and for you in particular?

One of the missions of the University has been the promotion of research to the highest standards. We are laying strong foundations for research at AKU and are already part of the international research network, as the numerous awards to our faculty attest. If recruitment and development could be matched with the progress in research, we could further strengthen this position amongst both national and international peers. I was fortunate to be able to join AKU in 1984, the only university at the time which provided a solid infrastructure for research in Pakistan. As I look back, the past 19 years have been very productive for me and I hope to continue this rewarding association with AKU.

What makes you an effective educator at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels?

Ideally, a teacher should be focused as well as versatile in order to understand the concept of integration in basic sciences and the objectives of a lecture. Of course one has to be patient and

interesting so that students remain attentive. A teacher has to be committed and encouraging, and strive to be both a mentor and a role model. I have personally had a supervisory role in the award of six PhDs and three MPhils from both national and international universities.

What are your future challenges?

Future challenges include making AKU a centre of reference and excellence at par with national and international institutions. Merit and equality should continue to be the objectives in our instruction, research and service towards building healthy societies.

Learning and taking up exciting new challenges in life is an ongoing process for me. Soon, I hope to apply for a patent for a new anti-inflammatory drug from AKU. It is a difficult but not an impossible process. I am also involved in publishing new material on drugs, particularly in the inflammatory and cardiovascular areas. I have learnt to seize the opportunities that have come my way and remain motivated to make my modest contributions. ■

New Strategies in Learning: Renewal of Undergraduate Medical Curriculum

AKU strives for excellence through continuous review of existing programmes and the introduction of new ones. Three aims are always at the forefront in such deliberations: quality, relevance and impact. Its undergraduate medical curriculum has accordingly been under scrutiny by AKU faculty since 1999. The renewed MBBS curriculum was implemented in the academic year beginning October 2002, for the Class of 2007. It builds on the strengths of the present programme, while increasing its flexibility. It also seeks to enable students to direct their own learning, to develop more broadly, and function effectively in any setting. The improved curriculum is based on the principles of adult learning and incorporates current Evidence-Based Medical Education precepts.

The change introduces an integrated curriculum including problem-based learning, early involvement with patients, increase in student electives and research options, and a deeper understanding of broader societal issues. Similar changes are required by the General Medical Council of the United Kingdom, and are pre-requisites for re-accreditation of all medical colleges in Canada. They have also been adopted at renowned medical schools. For example, Harvard Medical School (The New Pathway) in USA, McMaster University in Canada, and the University of Sydney in Australia, to name a few.

Problem-based learning emphasises the integration of clinical, basic and community health sciences where students learn medical science in the context of prevalent health problems common in everyday practice, emphasising the relevance to practice issue. Problem-based learning has several other desirable outcomes. It utilises small group

learning where students learn to discuss and explore concepts and ideas. This inculcates the art of self-directed learning in students – necessary for continuous learning. This method also increases the use of library, web searches and other learning resources by students. It incorporates a broader role for faculty, a change from primarily imparting information to facilitate learning, with opportunities for frequent and closer faculty and student interaction. Early contact with patients also fulfils the students' aspiration of enrolling in medicine, focusing on improving their work ethics, clinical and communication skills.

There will be increased opportunities in the new curriculum for student research and on and off campus electives. Electives include self-selection of some clinical clerkships at AKU Hospital (AKU selectives), electives in Pakistan outside AKU and the final year elective will remain open – anywhere in the world. Community health will continue to be emphasised. An increased prominence of broader issues also aims to produce physicians who are caring members of society.

With the renewed curriculum, AKU medical students shall learn to solve problems by dealing with unfamiliar presentations, questioning, reasoning critically, finding solutions, making decisions and defending them based on best current evidence in literature. Assessment will be used to provide feedback to students to facilitate learning and to determine whether institutional goals are met. The process of learning is as important as the content learnt, and both will be assessed in accordance with well-defined curricular objectives. ■

General Surgery: Quality, Care and Education

The general surgeon takes care of a wide range of conditions which can be as complex as major cancer surgery, to common ailments such as hernias, gall stones and appendicitis. The clinical discipline of general surgery at AKUH is highly demanding due to the high proportion of surgical emergencies it caters to. The General Surgery programme has 10 full-time and three non full-time faculty members and is the largest section within the Department of Surgery. Among the clinical departments, it has one of the busiest patient care and teaching programmes.

Since its inception in 1985, General Surgery at AKUH has subscribed to quality patient care and education. The last decade has seen a greater emphasis on the development of expertise in gastro-intestinal, hepatobiliary, pancreatic, colorectal, breast and endocrine, and trauma and vascular surgery.

"With strong support from oncology, pathology and radiology as well as nursing services, the section of General Surgery has been able to develop a multi-speciality approach to managing

Dr. Turab Pishori, Assistant Professor, completed a fellowship in colorectal surgery at the Cleveland Clinic in Florida in 2001. A service for functional colorectal disorders is in the process of being established under the leadership of Dr. Khalid Hameed, Associate Professor. Dr. Hasnain Zafar, Assistant Professor, is spearheading organised trauma management at AKUH following his fellowship in Trauma and Critical Care at Liverpool Hospital in Sydney, Australia.

The need for an alternative services model as envisaged by the University, has led to the development of a strong ambulatory surgery service. The proportion of Day Care Surgery procedures, in which patients do not have to stay in the Hospital overnight, has increased by 12 per cent since 2001. These procedures constitute 40 per cent of total surgical procedures, resulting in reducing costs for patients and increasing access.

Competitive price packages are offered for inguinal hernia repair, laparoscopic cholecystectomy and mastectomy. Dr. Inam Pal, Assistant Professor, has been innovative in



complex clinical states, such as the comprehensive management of breast cancer, including breast reconstruction and prosthesis," says Dr. Shaista M. Khan, Professor and Head of the Section.

Minimally Invasive Surgery, based on the philosophy of minimal interference with the body's natural structures, results in reduced hospital stay and rapid return to work. It began in 1992 and is now well established. Following vast experience in laparoscopic-assisted procedures in General Surgery, the general surgeons have helped establish these procedures in the sections of urology and gynaecology. The Section owes much of its progress to its surgeons who have remained relentless in their quest for continuing professional development.

enhancing cost effectiveness of inguinal hernia surgery and laparoscopic cholecystectomy.

The Section of General Surgery pioneered the programme of extending services to underprivileged communities under the auspices of Aga Khan Health Service, Pakistan (AKHS,P) in urban and rural areas of the country. Dr. Tabish Chawla, Assistant Professor, established surgery clinics in AKHS,P diagnostic centres in Karachi. For four years now, Dr. Rehman Alvi, Assistant Professor, has been deputed at a first-level referral centre in Singal, in the Ghizar district of the Northern Areas of Pakistan, where emergency obstetrical and trauma care are offered in addition to general surgery.

General Surgery carries one of the heaviest undergraduate teaching workloads in the clinical departments and is responsible for teaching medical students in their third and fifth years. In the field of postgraduate training, General Surgery was one of the first specialties to introduce structured residency training programmes in Pakistan. Dr. Asad Jamil Raja, Associate Professor, has played an important role in enhancing the programme by holding skills workshops, developing the core curriculum and clearly defining the objectives of training at each level of residency.

To date, 28 residents have completed their training and received their certification since the programme commenced in 1986. Graduates have gone on to pass their Fellowship examinations of College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan and UK Royal Colleges. The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh has recognised AKU General Surgery residency programme towards fulfilling requirements for higher surgical training and the

Intercollegiate Examination of UK. Fellowship positions in General Surgery with emphasis on trauma, breast and GI oncology are designed with the goal of producing academic surgeons. Dr. Hasnain Zafar and Dr. Rakhshanda Layeeque are the first graduates of the fellowship programme. The commitment to continuous medical education in the Section is spearheaded by Dr. Rizwan Azami, Associate Professor, who imparts training in laproscopic surgery to surgeons from other institutions in Pakistan.

"The deep involvement of faculty in scholarly activities, education and clinical services has resulted in a strong section of General Surgery," said Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed, the Quaid-e-Azam Professor and Chairman of the Department of Surgery, a general surgeon with an interest in hepatobiliary diseases. A research culture is also taking root in the General Surgery section, as in other sections of the Department, with an increasing number of clinical studies being undertaken. ■

Patient Welfare Programme

Akil Looks Towards a Brighter Future

Eighteen-year old Akil Khan had dreamt of coming to the bustling city of Karachi for his higher education. While in school, Akil had read about the many adventurous places in the world. Abbottabad, a hill station in northern Pakistan where he lived, did not offer the opportunities for learning and growth he aspired to. His parents, modest farmers, were too poor to give him any financial help, but fully supported his decision to continue studying. As Akil's two younger brothers watched him set off for the two day journey to the sprawling metropolis, they also hoped to follow suit one day.

Akil arrived in Karachi determined to make his own way and build a better life. He moved in with his uncle, aunt and their five children. Space was limited but he had a roof over his head and a share of whatever food was available. He enrolled himself in a local school, and then set about looking for a job to help pay his fees and keep body and soul together, with a hope to send whatever money he could spare to his family. He finally found work as an instructor in a Karate club, receiving a meagre monthly salary of Rs. 1,500 (US\$ 25).

Toiling away at his studies and work, Akil also diligently saved for a trip home. He was a conscientious worker and an inquisitive student, whose eagerness to learn was appreciated by his teachers. Akil also continued to supplement the paltry income of his parents and helped contribute towards his two brothers' school fees. Finally, he wrote to his family saying he would be coming home soon for a visit.

The family reunion was a joyous one. Akil was soon playing with his younger brothers in their fathers' maize fields. During one such occasion, Akil tripped and fell on a sharp piece of glass, which pierced him just below his right elbow. He was rushed to the local clinic where he received basic primary care.

He was then taken to a medical centre nearby for further treatment, but unfortunately some shards of glass remained in the wound. Over the coming days, as movement in his hand progressively diminished, Akil became increasingly despondent at the prospect of not being able to fulfill his dream by continuing to work and support himself.

Fearful for his future and anxious to find a cure for his hand, Akil came to AKUH. He was advised to have exploratory surgery along with a tendon transfer to restore movement back to his hand. When Akil asked his employer for a loan to pay for the surgery, he was guaranteed only part of the required amount. After explaining his situation to the doctor at AKUH, he was advised to contact the welfare officer, who assured him that the Patient Welfare Programme would sustain the remaining cost of the treatment.

The surgery cost Rs. 17,124 (US\$ 290), of which Akil paid Rs. 10,000 (US\$ 170), and the Patient Welfare Programme provided the balance of Rs. 7,124 (US\$ 121). Since his surgery, the mobility of Akil's hand has increased markedly. He continues with his studies and job, and has also started taking computer classes in the evenings. His future is an adventure waiting to happen. ■



Research and Policy Dialogues on Teacher Education and Decentralisation

Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED), with support from the Department for International Development (DFID), UK, is organising a series of five research and policy dialogues on key issues in education. The dialogues, which are being held throughout the country over a period of one year, aim to create awareness about the role and importance of research in policy-making and encourage public, private and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to build research partnerships in education.

The first two dialogues were held on Teacher Education and Decentralisation in Education in April 2002 in Karachi and July 2002 in Islamabad, respectively. At the Teacher Education dialogue, participants included policy-makers from federal, provincial and district levels in the government, researchers, teachers, teacher educators, representatives of NGOs and donors. Various policies and small and large-scale programmes on teacher education were reviewed and concerns were raised regarding the poor implementation of policy statements, lack of quality research and the inaccessibility and irrelevance of local research. The need for research partnerships was also highlighted and a proposal for initiating an association of policy-makers and researchers was submitted.

The then Minister for Education, Sindh, Professor Anita Ghulam Ali, applauded AKU-IED for providing a forum for policy-makers, researchers and education practitioners to share their views on teacher education. She urged organisations involved in this field to build the self-esteem of teachers and raise the status of the teaching profession. She underlined the importance and relevance of research for policy-making and said that such dialogues are helpful in increasing the awareness of research and its utilisation. The Minister also emphasised the need for a broad perspective when considering stakeholders in education, so that all sectors of society are involved in policy-making through consultation and research.

The second policy dialogue focused on sharing the experiences of devolution and decentralisation in the education sector from across the country. Once again there was cross-sectoral participation from governmental policy-makers as well as researchers and implementers from both public and private sectors including NGOs. Representatives from the four provinces shared their experiences of the decentralisation process in their respective areas. Key issues, along with challenges, were also identified. These included the advantages and disadvantages of decentralisation and its impact on teacher autonomy without compromising educational excellence. Contributors also discussed what could be done to ensure that decentralisation led to improvement in the access and quality of education available.

A keynote speaker at the second dialogue, Imtiaz Gillani, Minister for Education, North West Frontier Province, referred to the structural changes made recently in his province's education sector to accentuate the impact of decentralisation.

These included district level committees which prevented a single individual from usurping full decision-making powers. He concluded that "Although a central mechanism is necessary, things work better decentralised."

Professor Anita Ghulam Ali, who also attended the second dialogue, urged that devolution be viewed as a "sharing of power." She said that "It should be the people who tell the policy-makers what they want, through lessons learnt from community experiences across Pakistan."

Welcoming the participants at the second dialogue, Dr. Gordon Macleod, Director, AKU-IED, said that "The dialogue might not necessarily achieve instant results, but would at least initiate a process of further interaction among researchers and policy-makers." He added that as collaborators, they could "identify questions, find ways of doing research, and work out how those results might be used in the joint development of policies."



Imtiaz Gillani (2nd from left), Minister for Education, NWFP; Dr. Gordon MacLeod (2nd from right), Director of AKU-IED, during the Research and Policy Dialogue on Decentralisation, in Islamabad in July 2002.

Commenting on the impact of the second dialogue, Dr. Iffat Farah, Head of Research and Policies, AKU-IED, said that in trying to hold such interchanges, "AKU-IED has started a process which not only gives people opportunities for discussions with each other, but also allows researchers, policy-makers and implementers to sit together and think of the contributions they can make." She concluded that "The decentralised system has its challenges but also its opportunities. We need to see how each of us, universities included, can make an input into the process."

Future dialogues are on the themes of: Effective Resource Utilisation Through Public Private Partnership (Quetta, October 2002), Curriculum Reforms and Review (Peshawar, February 2003) and Quality Assurance (Lahore, March 2003). ■

Steering Committee on Higher Education Wide-Ranging Reform Package for Public Universities

The President of Pakistan and the Federal Cabinet approved the proposals of the Steering Committee on Higher Education for public university reform in August 2002. The Steering Committee had been appointed by the President of Pakistan in March to develop an implementation plan for the recommendations of the earlier Task Force on Improvement of Higher Education and the Study Group on Science and Technology. The Committee, chaired by Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, President, AKU, included eminent educators and vice-chancellors of public universities, as well as leading scientists and professionals.

The proposals include doubling annual Government allocation to public universities over the next three years to Rs. 8 billion (US\$ 130 million) – with the President immediately authorising an additional Rs. 1 billion (US\$ 16 million) to be allocated for universities from within the current budget; detailed guidelines for universities to enhance academic quality; and restructuring of governance and management systems through a model Ordinance.

The Task Force, co-chaired by Kassim-Lakha and Syed Babar Ali, Pro-Chancellor, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), had earlier presented broad-based recommendations to "transform the country's institutions of higher education into world-class seats of learning, equipped to foster high quality education, scholarship and research to produce enlightened citizens with strong moral and ethical values to build a tolerant and pluralistic society." In parallel, the Study Group, led by the Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman, had underlined the importance of higher education for knowledge-based economic growth.

Based on the recommendations of the Task Force and the Study Group, the Steering Committee presented an integrated package for the reform of public universities. Two members of the Steering Committee, Dr. Ishrat Husain, Governor, State Bank of Pakistan, and Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, Minister for Finance, Government of Sindh, discussed the highlights of the plan at an AKU faculty assembly in September.

Discussing a major feature of the Steering Committee plan, Dr. Shaikh outlined its financial aspects, saying "the reform...is about resource mobilisation." He noted that the plan aimed at drastically enhancing access to higher education through financial assistance to underprivileged students and a doubling of Government allocation to public universities within three years. An increase in faculty pay is an integral part of the plan, coupled with transparent performance assessments and a tenure track procedure. Dr. Shaikh linked the increases in funding to improved systems for absorbing that funding.

Dr. Husain, speaking on the occasion, noted that part of the enhanced "resource disbursement will be conditional on achievement of benchmarks of reform...We must bring in

quality, outreach and access but link (these) to actual performance. Once the specific indicators are reached, universities can expect more funding." Dr. Husain also drew attention to the need to create an enabling environment conducive to academic quality, such as the one AKU was establishing through hard work and commitment. To encourage public sector universities in this regard, he noted



Presenting a review and analysis of the proposals of the Steering Committee on Higher Education are Dr. Ishrat Hussain (left), Governor, State Bank of Pakistan; Shamsh Kassim-Lakha (centre), President, AKU, and Chairman of the Committee; and Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, Minister for Finance, Planning and Development, Government of Sindh.

that "We want to separate governance from management and lay down the boundaries between governance and effective management." Both Dr. Husain and Dr. Shaikh underscored the key role of Kassim-Lakha in coordinating the intensive effort. They also pointed out the importance of AKU and LUMS in guiding and providing indigenous models for academic quality as well as governance and management systems.

Speaking at the faculty assembly, Kassim-Lakha noted that the Steering Committee had provided critical input into the creation of the Higher Education Commission. Earlier, the Task Force had recommended that the regulatory University Grants Commission be abolished and a new, enabling Higher Education Commission be established. The Steering Committee was guided by this approach to advise the Government on creating a new body that could support reform at the public university level. Appreciating the Government's openness to reform, and President Pervez Musharraf's personal interest and leadership in the work of the Steering Committee, Kassim-Lakha emphasised that the Higher Education Commission could only support universities that wish to reform themselves. Past experience, he noted, has proven that universities themselves must be the focal point of reform, and he hoped that increased Government funding and support from the Higher Education Commission would allow this. The Higher Education Commission was also notified by the Government in August 2002, with Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman as its Chairman. ■

AKU Accredited in Kenya and Tanzania

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The Chancellor, thanking the Commission for the cooperation and assistance it had extended to AKU, stressed the importance of educating "men and women in the health sector, the education sector and particularly in the management of those sectors," to address the critical problem of capacity building in these areas. His Highness emphasised his continuing commitment to this ongoing process of societal development, and hoped the University would be able to play its part and "serve the people of Kenya and the people of East Africa."

This recognition by the higher education authorities enables AKU to proceed with setting up a governing body, begin construction, recruit academic staff, advertise its programmes and enrol students. Dr. Grace Miller, Regional Director of the Advanced Nursing Studies (ANS) programme, noted that such collaborative endeavours have the advantage of shared expertise in curriculum development and international linkages.

Landmark Graduation Ceremony in Uganda

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Uganda's Minister in Charge of the Presidency, Honourable Professor Gilbert Bukenya, was the chief guest on the occasion and was joined by senior dignitaries from Uganda and overseas. Addressing the graduates and over 300 guests, Professor Bukenya noted the importance of this graduation as a milestone in the government's efforts to upgrade the quality of education and health care in Uganda and offered every support for future programmes of AKU in the country. He said, "We are delighted that AKU has established its academic programmes in Uganda. The future growth of our country is strongly linked to the development of our human resources. Uganda needs educated, committed and caring nurses and teachers to ensure healthy bodies and healthy minds in all our citizens."

Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, President, AKU, said the University's nurse and teacher education programmes established in Uganda are part of its regional initiative in Eastern Africa aimed at developing the skills and career advancement opportunities for professionals. He also thanked His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni and the Ugandan authorities, professional bodies and councils for showing great foresight in facilitating and encouraging higher education programmes, which simultaneously upgraded human resources and contributed to the quality of health care and education in the country.

Describing the graduating students as the pioneers of the University's programmes in the region, President Kassim-Lakha continued that "In some countries, universities internationalise themselves simply by increasing the number of foreign students on campus. AKU sees internationalisation as taking the campus to the students in their home countries."

AKU's involvement in education initiatives is undertaken through its Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED), in collaboration with its AKDN partner, Aga Khan Education Services. It has been conducting teacher education programmes in Kenya and Tanzania to enhance teaching and school management skills, and so far 177 course participants have completed AKU's Certificate in Education programmes. A further 61 participants are currently enrolled in certificate programmes in Tanzania. Since 1994, 19 teachers from East Africa have successfully completed their master's degree in Education with the Teacher Education specialisation (MEd). Another 12 teachers are currently enrolled in the ongoing two-year MEd programme. The MEd graduates have a key role in conducting the Certificate in Education programmes. Such cooperation between AKU and its stakeholders provides a model for effective collaboration between developing countries. ■



AKU faculty and trustees with graduates of Advanced Nursing Studies and Master of Education degree programmes, at the first graduation ceremony in Uganda.

He also congratulated those students receiving their general nursing diplomas under the Advanced Nursing Studies (ANS) programme, and welcomed the 43 incoming students to the programme. In her valedictory address, Rebecca Ssenyonjo, one of the first graduates of the ANS programme, highlighted its future impact for the country saying, "Today is not the end of our journey, but a beginning. Each one of us has the responsibility to implement what we have learnt to make a difference in the health status of the people of Uganda and to enhance the development of the nursing profession." The ANS programme is designed to provide continuing and higher education to practising nurses and nursing managers without the need for leaving work places or homes for extended periods.

In addition to the three nursing graduates, two teachers received their Master of Education degrees, 25 school teachers their Visiting Teacher Programme certificates and 27 education inspectors their certificates in Education Management. Margaret Mukobe, who completed the two-year Masters of Education programme at AKU Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) in Karachi, said, "The enabling

environment I found at AKU-IED allowed me to re-think previous practices and beliefs about teaching and learning. I believe it is we the teachers who must make the difference to give our students quality education which is so necessary for national development." Teacher education programmes offered in Kampala, were developed jointly by AKU and the Ugandan government to introduce new teaching and learning methodologies and philosophies to the country. To date, 88 Ugandan teachers and head teachers have completed AKU's certificate and degree programmes in education and educational management.

Dr. Robert Buchanan, former Dean of Cornell University Medical College in Ithaca, New York, and a Founding Trustee of AKU, also attended the ceremony. He said, "The graduates today are a manifestation of the vision of His Highness the Aga Khan that focuses on preparing talented young people for leadership, with a special emphasis on programmes for women." The latter is evidenced in the University's emphasis on the nursing and teaching professions in which women participate in large numbers. ■

Nara MCH Centre

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The Centre is collectively managed by AKU, the local community-based organisation, the district administration and the Red Crescent Society, Khairpur, through a formal contractual agreement. At a time when there is increasing demand for meaningful and effective public-private partnerships, the MCH Centre can be regarded as a pioneer effort. While major funding for the Centre came from the multinational Lasco Oil Pakistan Limited, the local community donated a two-acre plot of land and created an endowment to contribute towards the operating cost. The Department of Health (DoH), Government of Sindh, has also actively collaborated on this project and a reporting linkage exists between the Centre and DoH.

The MCH Nara has gradually expanded its services from primary health to include general inpatient care, managing complicated deliveries, laboratory, ultrasound and ambulance services. Due to heavy patient load, the Centre now generates sufficient funding to cover its own expenses. However, the task of providing maternal and infant care does not end here. In an area where roads are few and females are not free to move without the consent of their husbands, considerable technical support and resources have been directed by the project towards establishing an effective outreach system for the villages. Two satellite dispensaries run by paramedics and a system of weekly mobile clinics for the desert areas, have been set up to build a sustainable health network around the MCH Centre. In addition, traditional birth attendants in each of the catchment villages have been trained by the project in safe methods for obstetric and neonatal care.

At present, the project is in a transitional phase with day-to-day management being gradually handed over to local NGOs while the scope of continuing technical support and capacity development is being considered for AKU. ■

Dr. Yasmin Amarsi Appointed First Dean of AKU-SON



Dr. Yasmin Amarsi was appointed the first Dean of Aga Khan University School of Nursing (AKU-SON) in August 2002. During her 22-year association with AKU, Dr. Amarsi has become a role model for nurses endeavouring to make a difference in their profession.

Dr. Amarsi has been a pioneer in many respects. Not only was she the first Pakistani nurse to obtain her PhD in nursing, but was also the first national to be appointed Director of AKU-SON. She completed her PhD in Nursing from Canada's McMaster University in 1998, MSc in Nursing from the University of Arizona, USA, and Post-RN BScN from McMaster University in 1985. She undertook her basic nursing education of RN, RM in Pakistan.

As a founding faculty member of AKU-SON, Dr. Amarsi has provided the School with dynamic leadership in its continued academic and geographical expansion, with new initiatives both in Pakistan and abroad. "Once viewed as a path many would not tread, nursing has emerged today as a profession, which is attracting a larger number of better calibre students from across the country. Most importantly, there is heightened recognition that nursing forms an integral part of the health care system," she said.

Acknowledging the support of His Highness the Aga Khan, Chancellor of the University, senior management of AKU and her family, she said, "My inspiration has been His Highness's words: to ensure that nursing receives the respect and recognition it deserves."

The University remains committed to advancing the nursing profession, a discipline largely comprising women. It thereby seeks to advance the status of women by empowering them and increasing their standing in society so that they become key partners in national progress. ■

AKU Establishes Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

In accordance with the recommendations of the Chancellor's Commission Report, and based on a detailed study undertaken by a Task Force of international scholars and experts, AKU established its Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC) in London in 2002.

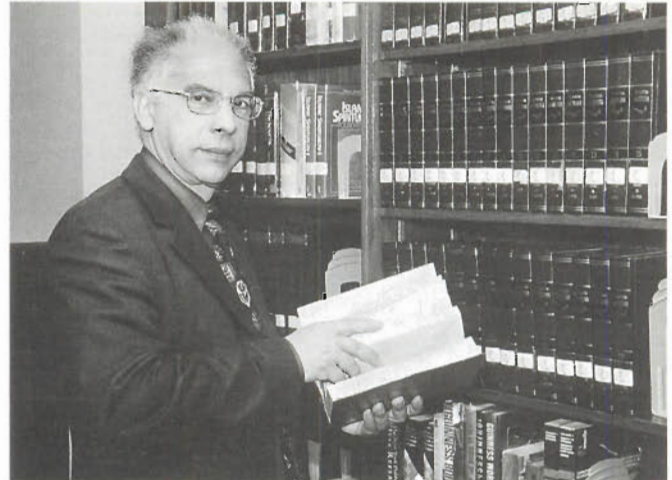
AKU-ISMC is not a school of divinity or theology. It focuses instead on the exploration of Muslim civilisations in a broad sense, through the study of the arts, philosophy, culture, sciences, architecture and other fields, with a view to encouraging increased understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims. It will undertake research and scholarly activities, with contributions from scholars from the east and the west, and from developed and developing regions. The Institute has the opportunity to make a distinctive contribution to the understanding of Muslim civilisations and the emergence of new attitudes among Muslims and non-Muslims towards the concerns of contemporary societies.

The first academic activity of AKU-ISMC will be a bibliographical indexing and abstracting project on works concerning Muslim civilisations, published in various languages. The index and abstracts will be made available worldwide via the Internet and other means. The Institute will also launch a programme on thematic research and related publications, utilising advances in communications technology to support international participation and dissemination in areas such as economic development and bio-medical ethics.

Educational programmes at the Institute will include an interdisciplinary master's degree as well as a range of specialist short courses in areas such as ethical values in business, medical ethics, perceptions of Muslim societies, and the role of culture in creating sustainable development. The Institute's educational focus will also include development of curricula on Muslim civilisations for use by other educational institutions including schools and AKU's Faculty of Arts and Sciences, which is now under planning.

Dr. Filali-Ansary, recently appointed as Director of AKU-ISMC, affirms that "The Institute is intended to engender a qualitative shift within the study of Muslim civilisations. It should be able to give an impetus to new approaches to subjects related to what Muslims have experienced in the past and are experiencing at present. Qualities which will be needed most are creativity, dialogue and continuity."

A PhD from the Faculty of Letters, University of Dijon, France, Dr. Filali-Ansary has been closely associated with the planning and development of AKU-ISMC. He is a scholar of Islamic studies and philosophy from Morocco, and previously was the Director of the King Abdul-Aziz Foundation in Casablanca, which he helped develop in the mid eighties. The Foundation is recognised today as a highly-reputed library and research centre in the Maghreb.



Dr. Abdou Filali-Ansary, Director of the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, London.

The Institute's location at 3 Bedford Square, in the academic heart of London, will facilitate its future expansion and development. London is at a geographical and intellectual crossroad, offering a conducive environment for the scholarship and dialogue required to pursue the mission of the Institute, and accessible to significant areas of the Muslim world. Its central location also facilitates collaboration with universities and other centres of learning in the UK, Europe and North America.

AKU-ISMC aims to make a difference in the understanding of Muslim civilisations through multidisciplinary approaches and research in the broader sense, and by mobilising scholars from across the world. While promoting insights and knowledge of the heritage of Muslim civilizations, it hopes to be a catalyst for positive inter-faith dialogue. ■

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

January - April 2003

Programme	Date
Continuing Medical Education (CME)	
• Update on Management of GI Bleeding	Jan 1
• Current Practices in Diagnostic Medicine	Jan 28 - 30
• Workshop on Joint Pains	Feb 26 - 27
'Signs, Symptoms and Care'- Public Health Awareness Programme	
• Dental	Jan 4
• Ophthalmology	Feb 1
• Psychiatry	Mar 15
• Family Medicine	April 5
Conferences	
• International Conference on Developing Family Medicine	Feb 21 - 23