



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

eCommons@AKU

AKU Newsletters

Publications

6-2002

AKU Newsletter : June 2002, Volume 3, Issue 1

Aga Khan University

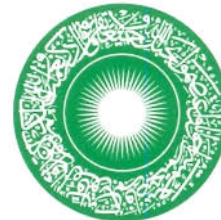
Follow this and additional works at: http://ecommons.aku.edu/aku_newsletter

Recommended Citation

Aga Khan University, "AKU Newsletter : June 2002, Volume 3, Issue 1" (2002). *AKU Newsletters*. Book 25.
http://ecommons.aku.edu/aku_newsletter/25

THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Newsletter



JUNE 2002

VOL 3, NO.1

Government Forms Steering Committee on Higher Education AKU President Appointed Chairman

President General Pervez Musharraf appointed Dr. Shams Kassim-Lakha, President, AKU, as Chairman of the Steering Committee on Higher Education, in March 2002.

As Chairman, Dr. Kassim-Lakha has the status of a Minister of State and reports directly to the President of Pakistan on matters relating to the working of the Committee.

In accepting this responsibility, Dr. Kassim-Lakha observed that his appointment was a recognition of AKU's achievements and would enable the University to share its experience for the benefit of higher education across Pakistan.

The key functions of the Committee include the development of a plan to improve the quality of education of public universities through such measures as faculty development, restructuring of the governance and management of public universities and improvement of their financial management and information systems, as well as the development of systemic linkages with other institutions, including industry in the private sector. Increasing the funding for higher education and building capacity for supporting education and research, including for science and technology, de-politicisation of campuses, and curriculum reforms are other priority objectives of the Committee.

Contd. on page 7

Siblings Return Home with Doctoral Degrees from Oxford and Toronto Universities Helping to Bring Change in Educational System

As they resume teaching at AKU's Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED), both the sisters are gearing up to participate in a much needed change in the country's educational system.

Dr. Nelofer Halai and her younger sister Dr. Anjum Halai have recently completed their doctoral studies from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, and the Department of Educational Studies, Oxford University, respectively.

Dr. Nelofer Halai as a faculty member and Dr. Anjum Halai (M.Ed. '96) as a graduate of AKU-IED, received full sponsorships from the Institute for their doctoral programmes. They hope that their insight into educational issues and a broader vision of teaching will provide a superior learning experience for their students at AKU-IED.

Contd. on page 7



Dr. Nelofer Halai (left) and Dr. Anjum Halai (M.Ed. '96)(right) envisage a change in the country's educational system.

HIGHLIGHTS

Fifth International Symposium on Typhoid Fever	2
Dr. Dodani Receives Award for Research on Chronic Diseases	3
US NIH Grant of \$0.5 million - CHS to Lead Programme	3
Seminar on Asthma: 'Fruits and Vegetables Prevent Asthma'	4
Stanley Wolpert on Jinnah's Vision of Pakistan	4
AKUH's First Representative Office in Dubai Inaugurated	5
Caring for Children	6
Nurallah Merchant - DG University Administration and CFO	8
Doctors Urge Vaccination Against Hepatitis B	9
Pakistan's First Successful Grafting Operation of Plastic Cornea	10
AKUH's Home-based Nursing Care Goes Beyond Campus	10
Patient Welfare Programme	11
First Academic Presence Abroad Established in Uganda	12
Dr. Robert Baker Appointed Provost	12

Fifth International Symposium on Typhoid Fever and other Salmonellosis

Over 200 National and International Delegates Recommend Increased Public Health Spending on Preventive Strategies

Despite major advances in understanding the risk factors for typhoid fever, the disorder is still widely prevalent throughout the developing world. It is estimated that typhoid fever accounts for almost 16 million cases and over 600,000 deaths annually worldwide, according to World Health Organisation (WHO).

The focus of the fifth international symposium organised by AKU in February 2002 was Typhoid Fever and other Salmonellosis. The three-day workshop and symposium was held in collaboration with WHO, the Wellcome Trust, International Center for Genetics and Biotechnology (ICGEB) (Trieste), International Vaccine Institute (Seoul), and National Institute for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering (NIBGE) (Faisalabad). It was attended by speakers and delegates from UK, US, Switzerland, Australia, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Korea and several other countries.

Over 200 national and international delegates attended the symposium and workshop on molecular methods in the epidemiology and diagnosis of typhoid, and strongly recommended an increase in public health spending on preventive strategies such as provision of clean water, sanitation and vaccination programmes.

The inaugural session of the symposium featured a keynote address by the chief guest, Prof. Atta-ur-Rahman, Federal Minister for Science and Technology who, while describing typhoid as a poor man's disease, said that because most pharmaceutical companies found it difficult to invest in the development of anti-typhoid drugs due to diminished returns, the progress in curbing typhoid had been slow. He proposed the use of biotechnology in fighting typhoid, especially the development of vaccines and biodiagnostic tools, and said that this technology was one of the areas the government had identified for its focus. In his keynote lecture on Global Status and Preventive Strategies for Typhoid Fever, Dr. Bernard Ivanoff of WHO stated that typhoid fever was a global disease, occurring endemically throughout the developing world. Dr. Ivanoff stated that, "Although available data from developing countries are probable estimates of the true burden, there are indications that the true incidence of typhoid in South Asia may exceed 500 cases per 100,000 population." Referring to a recent survey in Delhi and Karachi, he suggested that the disease was much more common in pre-school children.

In the opening plenary session, Dr. Chris Parry from Oxford presented an overview of treatment strategies for typhoid and highlighted that although fluoroquinolones are still very effective in the treatment of typhoid, there are worrying trends of increasing resistance in different parts of the world. Dr. Rumina Hasan, Associate Professor in the Department of Microbiology at AKU, echoed this further in a presentation on increasing quinolone-resistance among typhoid isolates in Karachi.

In his presentation on clinical and therapeutic aspects of typhoid fever in Pakistan, Dr. Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, Professor of Paediatrics at AKU, highlighted the growing importance of typhoid as a public health problem in Pakistan. He explained, "Available information indicates that the disease is predominantly a paediatric disorder with almost 70% of all culture proven cases occurring in children." He added that the severity of disease and rates of hospitalization also appeared to be higher in this population. Referring to a study among urban community setting in Karachi using passive surveillance, Prof. Bhutta said that high rates of typhoid fever were seen in children. Explaining further, he said that by using a simple system of clinical screening and decision making in community settings, the investigators were able to recognise almost 75% of cases of typhoid successfully and treat almost 80-85% with the right choice of antibiotics.



During the symposium, Dr. Zulfiqar A. Bhutta highlighted the growing importance of typhoid as a public health problem in Pakistan.

In a session on diagnostics, Dr. John Wain from London's Imperial College reviewed the available options for microbiological detection of typhoid, highlighting the need for better quality control and adequate culture methods. Dr. Pak Leong Lim from Chinese University, Hong Kong, described available serological diagnostic tests and discussed newer methods that appeared promising. Other speakers in the session included Dr. Abdul Haque from NIBGE (Faisalabad), who described experience with the new PCR test for the detection of typhoid, and Dr. Tariq Mahmood, who shared his experience at JPMC in the use of ultrasound in the diagnosis of typhoid fever.

Other leading national and international speakers repeatedly highlighted the need for greater indigenous research into this disease and international collaboration in improving the understanding of the pathogenesis, spread, increasing drug resistance and effective vaccination strategies against typhoid. It was also suggested that WHO and other major international funding organisations of research needed to place much greater emphasis on this disease. ■

Dr. Dodani Receives Pakistan Academy of Medical Sciences Junior Gold Medal for Research on Chronic Diseases



Dr. Sunita Dodani (M.B.,B.S. '92), Assistant Professor in the Family Medicine division of the Department of Community Health Sciences at AKU, was the recipient of the prestigious Pakistan Academy of Medical Sciences Award for the year 2000, conferred in December 2001.

Dr. Dodani is one of only four young scientists from the entire country to have been selected for this award. Focusing mostly on common chronic diseases seen often in

family practice, particularly heart diseases, Dr. Dodani is now a senior author of five journal publications, and co-author of several others, which brings the total number of her publications in the last five years to 12, with three in the year in which she clinched the gold medal. It was this effort and her ongoing interest and work in research that qualified her for the gold medal.

Supported by a grant from the Aga Khan Foundation, Canada, Dr. Dodani is currently pursuing her Master of Science degree in Community Health and Epidemiology at Canada's Dalhousie University.

She is conducting her thesis work at AKU on the prevalence and comparison of cardiovascular risk factors in Karachi, consistent with her aim of developing skills in the field of clinical epidemiology. ■

US National Institute of Health Grant of \$ 0.5m for Environmental and Occupational Health Research Training Initiative in Pakistan Community Health Sciences to Lead Programme

AKU, in collaboration with the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), USA, has been awarded a grant of US \$0.5 million from the Fogarty International Center of the United States National Institute of Health, to co-develop research training courses in Karachi and abroad for Pakistani health professionals wishing to advance their expertise in occupational and environmental health.

The programme is to be led at AKU by Dr. Franklin White, Chair, and Dr. Masood Kadir, Assistant Professor at the Department of Community Health Sciences, and at UAB by Dr. Nalini Sathiakumar and Dr. Elizabeth Delzell, with support from other colleagues at both centres. The total value of the grant is approximately half a million US dollars, spread over a period of five years.

The grant will be used in the first instance to bring experts from UAB to AKU to help the Department of Community Health Sciences build upon its own developing capacity in this critical area of public health research and development, as well as to sponsor selected trainees for advanced education abroad.

The Department has already conducted landmark studies in environmental lead exposure and the adverse health impacts of water quality. The grant will assist it in developing further studies in these areas, as well as develop expertise in other priority areas such as vector control, pesticide exposure, noise and air pollution, and the assessment of workplace

health and safety. In 2001, AKU concluded a study of blood lead levels in a large representative sample of Karachi children, revealing that 80% have levels above that recognised internationally to be associated with risk of neurological impairment and, in some instances, more serious toxic effects.

A study of diarrhoea in remote northern villages demonstrated the critical importance of water, sanitation and hygiene interventions in reducing the incidence of this leading cause of child mortality throughout the country.

Both studies emphasize that medical care is an inadequate response to such health problems, and that the root causes of environmental contamination must be tackled through public health measures, such as eliminating lead in petrol and ensuring access to safe potable water.

Initially AKU and UAB will launch short courses, targeting participants from universities, industry, regulatory agencies and environmental NGOs. They will also co-host two workshops per annum on priority topics and develop for Pakistanis at both institutions medium and longer term degree training options, that go beyond the usual limits of traditional medical education.

The long-term aim is to develop indigenous capacity within Pakistan for all levels of training relevant to these critically important aspects of public health. ■

Seminar on Asthma 'Fruits and Vegetables Prevent Asthma Attacks'

Children whose diet includes fruits and vegetables have decreased chances of developing asthma in later life. This was stated by Prof. Javaid Khan, Consultant Chest Physician at AKUH. He was speaking at the first of a series of educational seminars on asthma held at the University in January 2002, in collaboration with the Global Initiative for Asthma.



Consultant chest physicians and paediatricians at AKU addressing the audience during one of the ongoing series of seminars on Asthma organised by the University.

Elaborating on the role of diet in asthma, Dr. Khan said that fruits and vegetables contain certain substances which protect the lungs from damage caused by air pollution. Dr. Khan advised that patients should eat a balanced diet and "contrary to common belief, there is no need to avoid rice, milk and yogurt." Dr. Javaid said that asthma is on the rise in various parts of the world, and it is mainly the changing lifestyles that are to blame for the recent jump in asthma. He also termed smoking, active or passive, as a major factor that worsened the condition of asthma patients.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Majeed Memon, a Chest Consultant at AKUH, said, "a good history and use of peak flow metre are sufficient to confirm the diagnosis of asthma; there is no need for any blood test." Yasmin Mithani, a senior nurse at AKUH, spoke about the various misconceptions regarding asthma that exist in the public mind in Pakistan. She said that asthma is "not a psychological disorder and patients with this disease can live a normal life, provided they receive appropriate treatment."

Dr. Naseeruddin Mahmood, Lecturer, Department of Paediatrics, highlighted the importance of breastfeeding for prevention of asthma in children. He strongly advised that children should be protected from tobacco smoke. Dr. Asif Imam, an allergy expert from AKUH, said that most asthma patients in Pakistan are allergic to house dust mite, a tiny insect which thrives in carpets, pillows and mattresses. He

strongly recommended that carpets be removed from at least the bedrooms. Use of special allergy-free covers for pillows and mattresses has been shown to reduce the chances of exposure to various allergens, responsible for precipitating asthma attacks. Dr. Fayyaz Hussain, Head of the Pulmonary Section at AKUH, accentuated the importance of inhalers in the treatment of asthma. He said, "inhalers are much safer than tablets or syrups in the management of asthma." He also assured the patients and participants that inhalers do not make a person habituated to them as is commonly believed in Pakistan.

Dr. Mohd. Irfan, a fellow in respiratory diseases, demonstrated the correct technique for the usage of inhalers, spacers and nebulizers to the asthma patients. Later, a video on asthma was shown and patient education material was distributed to the attendees.

Earlier, Nadeem Mustafa Khan, Director General and CEO of AKUH, highlighted the role AKU is playing in imparting medical education to the public. Others who spoke on the occasion were Dr. Wasim Jafri, Chair, Department of Medicine; Dr. Gaffar Billoo, Chair, Department of Paediatrics; and Khurshid Khawaja, Director Nursing Division. ■

Guest Lecture Series Stanley Wolpert on Jinnah's Vision of Pakistan



To commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of the founder of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, AKU invited world-renowned historian Professor Stanley Wolpert from the University of California, Los Angeles, to speak on "Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Vision of Pakistan". The lecture was organised as part of the University policy of broadening the education of its students, faculty and staff, by giving them an opportunity to benefit from interaction with national and international, distinguished speakers.

During his talk, Professor Wolpert highlighted the Quaid's leadership, quoting from his book the decisions Jinnah had taken at critical junctures in the history of the Muslims of South Asia. He illustrated to the audience the importance Jinnah placed on education, economic uplift and political training.

In a hall packed with people from all walks of life, Prof. Wolpert reaffirmed the Quaid's vision of Pakistan as a secular Muslim welfare state, and urged the people of Pakistan to work towards the realisation of this vision. ■

AKUH's First Representative Office in Dubai Inaugurated

AKUH's first international Representative Office was inaugurated in May, 2002 by H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Saqr Al Qassimi, Assistant Under Secretary and Director of Sharjah Medical District. Officials of the UAE Ministry of Health, the Consul General of Pakistan, cardiologists, prominent members of the Pakistani community and media representatives were present on the occasion. The AKU team from Karachi was led by Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, S.I., President of the Aga Khan University, and included Nadeem Mustafa Khan, Director General and Chief Executive Officer of the Hospital, Asif Fancy, Senior Director, Resource Development and Public Affairs, and Talaat Tyabji, Director Marketing and Public Affairs.



AKUH's first international Representative Office in Dubai was inaugurated by H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Saqr Al Qassimi, Assistant Under Secretary and Director of Sharjah Medical District (right), in the presence of Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, AKU President (centre) and Mr. Amanullah Larik, Consul General of Pakistan (left).

Addressing the select gathering at the inauguration ceremony, H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Saqr Al Qassimi appreciated the efforts of the University for providing an opportunity for cost-effective health care options to the UAE population and assured his continued support. He said, "We appreciate the efforts of the Aga Khan University for providing good quality medical treatments such as open heart surgery and oncology care and for opening an opportunity for cost-effective health care options to the UAE population and to assist patients in obtaining feedback from AKUH consultants on their medical reports and diagnosis. With deep-rooted relations between our two countries and mutual benefits, our friendship will flourish especially when we plant the seeds today. The co-operation between the UAE Ministry of Health and AKUH will get stronger with branches all over the Gulf and this friendship will flourish in the future with sweet fruit."

Thanking the chief guest, Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, informed the gathering that after the successful operation of the AKUH Patient Referral and Information Desk in Hyderabad, AKUH Representative Office in Dubai was the first representative office outside Pakistan. Commenting on the objective of this Office, he said, "It is established to

provide convenience and easy accessibility to AKUH's high-quality, cost-effective services to patients in UAE. The office will not only provide information about the facilities available at the Hospital but will also assist patients in obtaining feedback from AKUH consultants on their medical reports, scheduling appointments, providing cost estimates for treatment required and making transportation and lodging choices in Karachi."

Delivering the vote of thanks, Nadeem Mustafa Khan said that as a teaching institution, AKUH is committed to providing the best possible options for diagnosis of disease and team management of patient care that is comparable to the best medical centres in North America. The University Hospital provides a high quality of patient care covering a large spectrum of medical and surgical diagnoses and treatment, such as open heart surgery, hip replacement surgery, neurology, and oncology.

The Hospital's professional staff and facilities are among the best in the region. It has the distinction of being the first in Pakistan and among the first few teaching hospitals in the world to receive ISO 9002 certification for developing and maintaining consistent international standards of quality service. The Hospital receives a large number of patient referrals every year from East Africa and the Middle East. The AKU team had a productive meeting with Minister of Health, H.E. Hamad Abdul Rahman Al-Midfa. They discussed various opportunities that could be available for co-operation and collaboration between AKU and the Ministry of Health in UAE.

Accompanied by the Ambassador of Pakistan, His Excellency Maj. Gen. Retd. Salim Ullah, Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha also called on the Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research, His Highness Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak al Nahyan.



To mark the inauguration of AKUH's first international Representative Office in Dubai, two public health awareness programmes, "Signs, Symptoms and Care", were organised, one each in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The programmes received excellent encouragement and response from members of the public, and included presentations by Dr. Shahid Sami, Associate Professor and Head of the Section of Cardiothoracic Surgery (left), and Dr. Ata-ur-Rehman Quraishi, Assistant Professor of the Section of Cardiology (right). ■

Caring for Children

A branch of medicine devoted to diseases of children, infants and newborns, paediatrics, has a long and rich tradition of attracting the medical profession's best and brightest.

Looking at the crowds of children of all ages flocking to AKU's Department of Paediatrics, it is clear that this tradition is alive and well on campus. AKU's paediatricians combine the time-honoured medical ideals of service, education and research with a remarkable awareness of children's needs, making it the leading paediatrics department in the country.



AKU has cared for children from the time the University Hospital first opened its doors in 1985. "We are one of the largest departments of the University, with intensive commitments in all areas of modern paediatrics, including general and subspecialty care, residency and fellowship training, and research," notes Dr. Gaffar Billoo, the Kamruddin M. Jessani Professor of Paediatrics and Department Chairman. Dr. Billoo's positive assessment is echoed in the activities of the department's highly accomplished faculty. Dr. Zulfiqar Bhutta, the Husein Laljee Dewraj Professor of Paediatrics, has become world-famous for scientific contributions in the areas of micro-nutrient research, typhoid fever and neonatal infections. Professor Qamaruddin Nizami and Associate Professors Drs. Iqtidar Khan and Mehnaz Atiq are also highly regarded academics, with contributions in nephrology, paediatric public health and paediatric cardiology. A recent addition is Assistant Professor Dr. Anita Zaidi (M.B., B.S. '88), an infectious disease specialist who has returned after serving on the faculty of the Harvard Medical School. The other

Assistant Professors are Dr. Shahnaz Ibrahim, neurologist, and Dr. Zehra Fadoo (M.B., B.S. '91), a haematologist-oncologist. The faculty rolls also include Senior Instructors Drs. Ayesha Mirza and Sohail Salat, Instructors Drs. Shabina Arif and Nasir Rashid, and as many as 18 non-full-time consultants.

The Department of Paediatrics has distinguished itself by being pioneers in conducting academic research at AKU. A central theme of paediatrics research at AKU is community-based scientific investigations which aim at reducing

neonatal and childhood mortality in Pakistan. The Department is the recipient of multiple grants totalling more than US\$ 4.5 million in the last five years. Current research projects include World Health Organization (WHO) sponsored studies of treatment of meningitis and sepsis; International Vaccine Institute-funded studies of the burden of cholera, shigella, and typhoid, as well as assessment of the public health impact of a typhoid vaccination programme. A major cluster randomised controlled trial of community-based perinatal interventions in rural Pakistan recently received funding from WHO and Saving Newborn Lives initiatives of the Gates Foundation. With its prolific and widely cited academic output, the Department has already begun to influence national policy on paediatric care in the country.

The paediatrics faculty oversees a busy inpatient service with close to 100 beds spread in different areas including general care, special care, intensive care and neonatal intensive care. Bed occupancy is usually around 80%. The

outpatient facilities are equally busy, with regular clinics scheduled from 9 A.M. to 8 P.M., Monday through Saturday. As part of a comprehensive philosophy of care, there is close liaison with paediatric surgeons as well as with paediatricians practising outside AKU. The Department takes special pride in its teaching programmes, which train medical students and residents, and also provide advanced fellowship training to paediatricians who have already completed residency education. Inspired by their paediatrics rotations, many AKU medical graduates have gone on to take up the speciality, a testimony to the high teaching

standards that AKU paediatrics has maintained over the years. The Department also enjoys collaborative links for training selected individuals in the world's leading medical centres, including the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm.

Distinguished as the Department is, it still remains very conscious of the need to keep innovating. Dr. Billoo looks forward to one day realising the dream of a Maternal and Child Health complex at AKU that will provide holistic care to mothers and children. ■

Helping to Bring Change in Educational System

Contd. from page 1

Dr. Nelofer joined AKU in 1983 as a part-time instructor to teach science and mathematics courses in the Faculty of Health Sciences, becoming a full-time faculty member six years later. On completion of her Masters in Science Education from the USA, she went to AKU-IED "on loan" to help teach the Science Education component to the first M. Ed. cohort, which also included her sister Anjum. In 1996, she opted to transfer to AKU-IED to work in the field of Teacher Education, and later proceeded to Canada for her doctorate in Science Education. Her doctoral dissertation was a single case study titled, "Munazza's story: Understanding Science Teaching and Conceptions of the Nature of Science in Pakistan Through a Life History Study." At AKU-IED, Dr. Nelofer enjoys teaching both at graduate and undergraduate levels.

Dr. Anjum on completing her Masters in Teacher Education in 1996, worked part time at AKU-IED as a professional development teacher. Her role involved teaching at certificate and advanced diploma levels. Two years later, she joined AKU-IED as a full-time faculty member and taught at graduate and undergraduate levels. Anjum completed her doctorate in Mathematics Education from the University of Oxford, UK. Her thesis "Role of Social Interactions in Students' learning of Mathematics" has significant and powerful implications for teacher education practice. She believes that her doctoral research into students' learning has prepared her for making significant contributions in the field of mathematics education in particular and teacher education in general.

Dr. Nelofer and Dr. Anjum cherish their long association with AKU, which, they say, has been mutually productive. Dr. Nelofer adds: "I have returned to Pakistan strongly committed to making a difference, particularly in how science is taught at various levels. Unlike in the West, Pakistani students are generally keen to study science. Skilful teaching, using methods that allow students to question and engage actively with the science concepts being taught can improve the quality of student thinking. This in turn can boost our economy by allowing a more skilled and thoughtful workforce to emerge." ■

Steering Committee on Higher Education

Contd. from page 1

The senior level Committee was formed by President Musharraf subsequent to receiving recommendations of the Task Force on the Improvement of Higher Education, established by the Ministry of Education, and the Study Group on Higher Education in Science and Technology by the Ministry of Science and Technology. The reports had earlier been accepted in principle by the government.

Appointed by the Federal Minister for Education, Zobiaida Jalal, in April 2000, the Task Force was co-chaired by Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha and Syed Babar Ali, Pro-Chancellor of the Lahore University of Management Sciences, and included, amongst other members, the Federal Secretary of Education, the Chairman of the University Grants Commission, and eight vice chancellors of public universities and representatives of private universities. In developing its implementation plan to be submitted to President Musharraf by mid-August, the Steering Committee has already undertaken wide-ranging consultations with vice chancellors, faculty members and students as well as the governors and high officials of all four provinces.

Members of the Steering Committee include Dr. Ishrat Hussain, Governor, State Bank of Pakistan; Dr. Abdul Hafiz Shaikh, Minister for Finance, Government of Sindh; Dr. Zulfiqar Gilani, Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar; Dr. Mazhar-ul-Haque Siddiqui, Vice Chancellor, University of Sindh; Dr. Najma Najam, Vice Chancellor, Fatima Jinnah Women's University, Rawalpindi; Dr. Tariq Banuri, Senior Research Director, Stockholm Environment Institute, Boston Office; Prof. Riazuddin, Quaid-e-Azam University; Prof. Iqbal Chaudhry, HEJ Research Institute of Chemistry, Karachi University; Dr. Sohail Naqvi, Vice President, Enabling Technologies; Dr. Shaukat Hamid, Director General, Computer Control, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission; Dr. Waqar Masood Khan, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Federal Government; Ebrahim Sidat, Country Manager and Partner, Sidat, Hyder, Qamar & Company, Karachi; and Mr. Salman Akram Raja, Senior Partner, Raja Muhammad Akram & Company, Lahore. ■

Nurallah Merchant - Actuarial Background Helps Meet Multifaceted and Unique Challenges of a University

Nurallah A. Merchant is Director General of University Administration and Chief Financial Officer. He joined AKU as Manager, Budget and Planning, in 1986, and has since proven his mettle in all affairs that came within the purview of his work. His association with AKU speaks of dedication and untiring efforts towards the University achieving higher standards of quality in every sphere of its operation.

Apart from AKU, Mr. Merchant has a rich experience of having worked in a variety of settings – management of insurance companies, pension funds, and investments – in Asia, Europe and America, and was once associated with one of the largest actuarial firms in the world, William M. Mercer Inc. He completed the associateship examination of the Institute of Actuaries, London, in 1972 and was awarded a certificate in Finance and Investment in 1976 by the same institute.

He believes that his years of learning and experience on the actuarial ground have equipped him to meet the multifaceted and unique challenges that AKU presents as it expands across continents and strives relentlessly for excellence.

How does the University ensure efficient use of resources without compromising on quality?

At AKU's inception, the underlying principle was that there would be no compromise on quality. At every level, from the standard of its buildings, equipment and their upkeep, to the recruitment of faculty and staff and their development, the aim has always been quality. The University's financial planning is targeted to ensure that adequate resources are available to support the entire enterprise. Programme expansions are initiated once the University has a feasible plan towards sustaining the operations of new initiatives and expansions in the long term.

One of the key ingredients for resource planning is the engagement of faculty and staff at all levels. Development of budgets and long-term plans are highly consultative processes throughout the University and they help to create awareness and acceptance of responsibilities. Each departmental head or manager is in charge of the resources that are allocated to his or her department. Once you engage good professionals, put them in charge and hold them accountable, they will ensure efficient use of the University's resources.

At a more "macro" level, that is the overall planning level, the University tries to ensure that its organisational set up allows it to achieve economies of scale and retain efficiencies. I am confident that the University will respond to this challenge by continuing to re-evaluate its systems, policies and procedures in order to find better ways of doing business. The same yardstick applies to education, especially higher education. Providing high quality education is a challenge for any educational institution.



How does AKU respond to this challenge?

Quality education is a total learning experience that encompasses academics, sports, extra curricular activities and, most importantly, the development of a better understanding of societal responsibilities. To achieve these objectives, an institution needs to invest heavily in its people – faculty and staff – and its facilities – buildings, infrastructure and equipment. The latter may be somewhat simpler to manage. The sheer diversity of people with a variety of educational qualifications, knowledge and experience coupled with the opportunity for continuous learning and development, truly makes this enterprise extremely complicated and resource intensive.

The equation would not be complete without emphasising that students are the focal point of a university. A good educational institution should be able to attract the brightest and most promising students. AKU has a needs-blind policy, which admits students to all its educational programmes purely on merit. This truly responds to the University's commitment towards social development and creating opportunities to attract the best minds. Even though the tuition fees are a small percentage of the full cost of an AKU medical education, more than one-third of students receive additional financial assistance from the University.

AKU continues to challenge the content and the delivery of its educational programmes. The Medical College faculty is engaged in the modification of its curriculum to promote problem-based learning. Throughout the campus there is an increasing emphasis on the use of information technology in learning. AKU Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) is in the second phase of its evolution. Besides programme expansions and new initiatives, the Institute is also in the mode of programme modifications and alternative delivery systems, such as open learning. These are just a few examples, all of which are creating their own sets of demands on the University.

Tell us about the future national and international plans for the University.

At the national level, or should I say the regional level, the most significant investment of the University will be in the establishment of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS). We have already purchased 400 acres of land. FAS could support many of the critical developments, such as the Institute of Human Development and the Institutes of Economic Growth and Society as well as Planning and Management of Human Settlements.

The Stadium Road campus is intended to be dedicated to the further development of Health Sciences related activities. This would include academic as well as service programmes. Construction of the Nazerali-Walji Ambulatory Care Building will be completed by August 2002, and of Khimji Cardiac Building in December 2003. Future buildings in our plans include the Women's Residences, an Oncology Building and Offices for faculty and staff. In Health Sciences, future academic programmes are likely to be concentrated in graduate and postgraduate studies. Expansion of research is also very high on the University's agenda and good progress has been made towards fostering a research culture.

AKU-IED has equally enjoyed tremendous success in a fairly short span of approximately nine years. Besides having students from 14 countries, it is increasingly collaborating

with government and non-government institutions for addressing policy issues while assisting in the improvement of school education. The Institute will also continue to build on its successes in research.

Increasingly, the establishment of Professional Development Centres (PDCs) is being seen as an integral part of supporting future development in schools, and to this effect there is mounting pressure on AKU-IED to support new PDCs both in Pakistan and in other regions such as East Africa, where the Aga Khan Education Services already has a network of schools to support such initiatives.

The University has recently established the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations in London, and has also invested in the launching of Advanced Nursing Studies programmes in three East African countries, i.e. Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Academic programmes have begun in Uganda and will start in other countries as well once accreditation has been received. In the foreseeable future, the University intends to bring medical education programmes to East Africa after the upgradation of the Aga Khan Health Services' hospitals in Nairobi, Kisumu and Dar-es-Salaam. In short, AKU has truly become an international University as described in its Charter. While planning for international programmes continues, AKU will invest in the improvement of its infrastructure and communication systems. ■

Hepatitis Awareness Day Doctors Urge Vaccination Against Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B and C are global health problems. Worldwide 350 million people are carriers of Hepatitis B. At a reported rate of 5%, the number of Hepatitis B carriers in Pakistan is estimated at around seven million. This places a great burden on the government and the patients.

With this situation in view, the Gastroenterology Section of AKUH marked Hepatitis Awareness Day in January 2002, with a symposium focussing on the different aspects of these dreaded diseases and their prevention.

Prof. Wasim Jafri, Head of the Gastroenterology Section and Chair of the Department of Medicine, stressed in his lecture the importance of vaccination against Hepatitis B which is a global health issue today. "In Pakistan, out of a population of 140 million, there are at least seven million carriers. This places an enormous burden not only on the government but also on the patients. Millions of rupees are spent on its treatment, which remains unsatisfactory in the face of limited treatment options available. It is actually far better to prevent Hepatitis B through timely vaccination. Hepatitis B can almost completely be prevented by providing vaccination against the infection very early in life, preferably in the first week after birth. There is also mother-to-infant transmission of Hepatitis B which occurs at the time of birth or just after," Dr. Jafri explained. It was further stressed that the greatest

problem with Hepatitis B is that 95% of infants who acquire this infection very early in life become chronic carriers of Hepatitis B. If this infection is acquired in the first year of life, it results in chronic liver disease and hepatocellular cancer in adolescents. However, if the infection is acquired in adult life, less than 10% of patients become carriers. "Hence, it is recommended that all newborns are vaccinated against Hepatitis B. In adults, the vaccine should be offered to people at high risk, such as health care workers, phlebotomists, dentists, paramedics and nurses," suggested Dr. Jafri. He added that the treatment of Hepatitis B available in Pakistan is at par with the rest of the world.

The Chief Guest, Dr. Mohammad Khurshid, Medical Director of AKUH and Associate Dean Clinical Affairs, spoke on the importance of Hepatitis B vaccination and urged awareness of Hepatitis B at all levels, especially among the general public so that the current carrier rate of Hepatitis B in Pakistan is reduced.

Dr. Saeed Hamid, Associate Professor at the Gastroenterology Section, spoke on the risk of Hepatitis C to health care professionals. He said that its prevention is possible with safe blood transfusion, use of disposable needles and syringes, safe disposal of hospital waste, as well as using sterilised surgical and dental equipment. This requires public awareness at all levels. Dr. Riaz Qureshi, Head of Family Medicine, stressed timely vaccination in families. Prof. Gaffar Billoo, Chair of the Department of Paediatrics, spoke on Hepatitis B vaccination in children, while Dr. Hasnain Shah, Associate Professor at the Gastroenterology Section, gave a lecture on the general aspects of Hepatitis C prevention. ■

Pakistan's First Successful Grafting Operation of Plastic Cornea Performed at AKUH

AKUH reached yet another milestone in late 2001, when one of its ophthalmologists performed the first-ever successful grafting operation of plastic cornea in Pakistan.

The operation was carried out by Dr. Asad Abbas (M.B., B.S. '89), Senior Instructor in the Department of Ophthalmology, on a patient whose vision had been impaired due to an accident involving acid. Due to the injury to his face and eyes, the patient had developed a severe scarring response that led to the development of an opacified and vascularized cornea, which was unsuitable for conventional corneal grafting.



Dr. Abbas' expertise in corneal grafting places Pakistan among the developed medical centres of the world in the field of ophthalmology.

Many inflammatory disorders of the eye, and more specifically the cornea, cannot be treated well with conventional corneal grafting, as the host ends up destroying the grafted tissue. This situation prompted a few pioneering ophthalmologists to think about alternative methods, including the development of keratoprotheses which are made with inert plastics and do not get destroyed by the host's defense mechanisms. Except for AKUH's grafting operation, Keratoprosthesis surgery with the Dolmen Type I and II Keratoprosthesis, has yet to be attempted in the subcontinent.

Prior to Dr. Abbas' successful effort, the grafting of plastic cornea was done only in a few developed countries. Very few centres around the world are equipped to perform this surgery, either because of lack of training in this field or lack of access to the hardware. In the past, such eye patients could only be treated in the USA or Europe, and that also at very substantial charges, but now they can be offered the same treatment at AKUH at affordable charges.

After obtaining his M.B.,B.S. degree from AKU, Dr. Abbas was trained in Ophthalmology, and developed special expertise in corneal grafting and in the grafting of plastic corneas. Dr. Abbas' recent successful endeavour has placed Pakistan among the medical centres of the developed world, particularly in the speciality of ophthalmology. ■

AKUH's Home-based Nursing Care Goes Beyond Campus

In its efforts towards providing greater quality care for patients, AKUH has initiated home-based nursing services in 2002. Through these services, the Hospital aims to extend nursing care to its patients in their homes after they are discharged.

These services are based on the concept of Home Health Programme that has evolved as a challenging and rapidly growing field, catering more extensively to the needs of patients by continuing to provide them care beyond the hospital setting. It is a concept of nursing care that has emerged with the recent economic, social and technological development.

Launched as a pilot project for a selected group of patients, the AKUH Home Health Programme has expanded into other areas near the Hospital following an overwhelming response from patients and their families. The range of care offered in the pilot project includes administration of intravenous medications, nebulizer as well as change of dressings. One of the key benefits of this programme is that it reduces stress

and agitation in patients, and spares them and their families the hassle of going all the way to the hospital for minor procedures.



Home-based nursing requires staff trained in special and basic emergency procedures.

The patients appreciate that the home-based nursing services have not only obviated the need to wait at the hospitals but have also proven to be cost-effective as they reduce the patient's length of stay at the hospital.

"My post-surgery period was not a pleasant experience, but AKUH's nursing care provided to me at home helped me overcome the problem of frequenting the hospital," remarks Fiza, a patient who underwent surgery. The programme requires supporting staff to work closely with the patient's

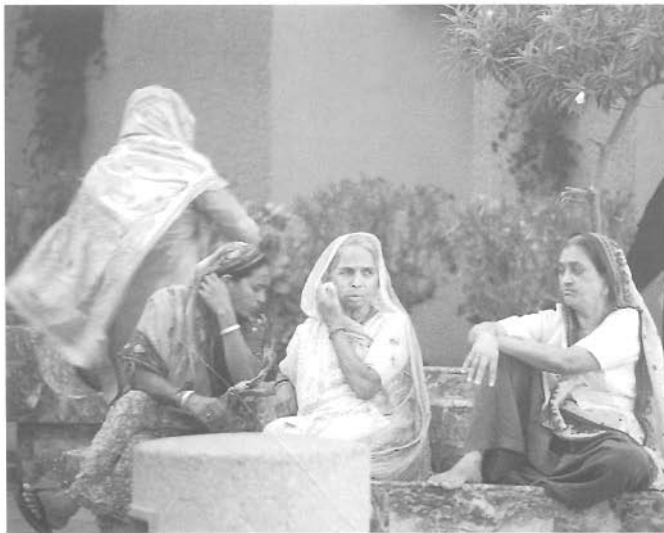
physician in an efficient and cost-effective manner. As dealing with the patients in their homes is quite different from tending them at the hospital, the staff working in this programme has been trained in special and basic emergency procedures.

With these services in place, AKUH envisages continuous improvement and additions of other services to the programme, all with a view to providing the best possible care to its patients and their families. ■

Patient Welfare Programme

Noor Jehan Cured of Acute Cholecystitis

Noor Jehan's life was a constant battle with poverty and misery, compounded by a large household. A working mother with nine children, she tried to make ends meet by working as a domestic servant in a house in Federal-B Area of Karachi, while Rashid, her husband, made Rs. 80 per day (US \$1.5) by selling candyfloss to kids at a nearby school. It was a difficult life and the couple barely managed to clothe and feed their brood.



One day, while washing clothes at her employer's house, Noor Jehan experienced a searing pain in her abdomen and fainted. The family she was working for took her to a local general practitioner. The medication provided temporary relief, however the pain returned at intervals. She tried homeopathic treatment but her condition grew worse with the passage of time. Her health deteriorated to the point where she could no longer go to work, as she was in constant pain. Her earnings ceased and she could not even afford the pain killers. A friend brought her to AKUH, where she was diagnosed with Acute Cholecystitis and advised urgent laparoscopic cholecystectomy surgery, for which her husband was given an estimate of Rs. 50,000 (US \$834).

Even though they were financially challenged, they had the resources and the goodwill to seek assistance and loans from their employers and friends for the initial cost of treatment.

Noor Jehan's condition improved with proper diagnoses and treatment. Halfway through the treatment, her medications had to be changed due to certain complications.

Rashid expected the charges to stay within the deposited amount, but as treatment continued, charges increased accordingly. He mentioned his financial condition to the doctor attending Noor Jehan. The doctor referred Noor Jehan's case to the Patient Welfare Department. An AKUH welfare officer came to his aid and assured the family of financial assistance. The Hospital paid the additional Rs. 26,000 (US \$434) towards her treatment to which Noor Jehan responded well.

Noor Jehan recovered fully following her surgery and was discharged from the Hospital after ten days. She went back to work, and resumed contributing towards the family income and raising her children. ■

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

July - October 2002

Programme	Date
CME	
- Management of Common Paediatric Diseases	July 23 - 25
- Fever of Unknown Origin	Aug 20 - 22
- Management of Common Medical Conditions	Sept 23 - 27
- Interpretation of Abdominal X-rays	Oct 30 - 31
'Signs, Symptoms and Care' - Public Health Awareness Programme	
- Children's Limb Deformities	July 6
- Paediatrics	Aug 3
- Dementia - Failing Memory	Sept 7
Symposium	
- National Symposium: Early Childhood Care and Development	Sept 23 - 24

First Academic Presence Abroad Established in Uganda

AKU Helps Address Health Care Needs in East Africa

At the opening of the renovated facilities housing AKU's Advanced Nursing Studies (ANS) Programme in February 2002, the Hon. Abel Rwendeire, Minister of Trade and Industry of Uganda, stated, that "the philosophy of AKU is to offer 'excellence' – the establishment should be a yardstick for our standards" and remarked that, "the physical facilities being offered by AKU are of world class." He added, "The future of the health sector in this country and the region as a whole is being underwritten by this type of vital investment in human resource capacity building."

The Hon. Rwendeire, formerly the Minister of State for Higher Education and a long-time campaigner for continuing and higher education for nurses and other health professionals, recalled visiting the University in Pakistan in 1999. He remembered examining the curriculum and being struck by the fact that it offered nurses opportunities to continue their education as they work.

AKU's ANS Programme was developed in response to requests from governments and nursing leaders of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. It is operational in Uganda since January 2001 following the accreditation of the University in this country. Preparations for implementation of the programme in Kenya and Tanzania are well advanced. In Uganda, the first students in an 18-month Enrolled Nurse-to-Registered Nurse conversion course will complete their studies in July 2002, whilst those on a 30-month post-Registered Nurse, Bachelor of Science in Nursing Programme are expected to graduate in 2003. Recognising the value of work experience, the ANS Programme offers a flexible module approach and the community-based curriculum will enable the nurses to function effectively both in the hospital and in the community.

The Hon. Rwendeire described the major regional educational initiative as "an example of long-term investment that will address a critical need in health sector reform in East Africa. It is further evidence of the Aga Khan Development Network's (AKDN) commitment to social development in Uganda." "This institution," he continued, "is remarkable for a number of reasons. It brings professional nursing training and tertiary education of the highest international standards here in Uganda with a focus on our own specific needs. The Programme enables working nurses to continue to earn while they learn. Most importantly, it permits the knowledge gained to be readily applied. It also allows both public and private participating health care institutions to benefit from better qualified personnel, eventually enriching the country's professional resource base in one of its neediest sectors." Conducting the Minister and a small group of senior government officials on an informal tour of the premises during operating hours, Imelda Bagambaki, the Programme Academic Head, pointed out that the facility will include a

state-of-the-art skills laboratory, a library, lecture space and classrooms, as well as a computer laboratory.

Nurses constitute the largest percentage of health care providers in East Africa and are active at all levels of the health care system, from remote rural centres to sophisticated tertiary care hospitals in urban areas. Recognising that effective reform requires a significant investment in personnel who manage services and provide care, governments are developing plans to improve the competence and confidence of health professionals, especially nurses.

Conceptualised by the Aga Khan University School of Nursing in Pakistan, one of South Asia's leading academic and research institutions in the Health Sciences, the ANS Programme will go on to incorporate additional courses that will cater to specifically identified needs such as Education, Management, Accident /Emergency and Disaster Nursing.

Since entering into an Accord of Cooperation for Development with the Government of Uganda in 1992, AKDN has successfully completed a number of endeavours to rehabilitate social development projects, particularly in the area of education. Notable amongst these are the pre-primary, primary and secondary schools and the Enhanced Universal Primary Education in Kampala (EUPEK) resource centre at the Makerere Road complex. AKU's ANS Programme now brings to this same complex, an important higher education component. ■

Dr. Robert Baker Appointed Provost



Dr. Robert Baker has been appointed Provost of AKU. The Provost is the Chief Academic Officer of the University, reporting directly to the President.

Dr. Baker joined AKU as Professor and Director of the Institute for Educational Development in 1997. In 2000, he was appointed Director General, Planning with the responsibility to initiate a planning office at the University. Prior to joining AKU, he worked in South and South East Asian countries as a consultant and team leader on the design and evaluation of national social sector programmes with various international agencies. He has held faculty and management positions at universities in Australia and Canada.

Dr. Baker completed his undergraduate study at the University of Melbourne and Masters and Ph.D. degrees in Sociology of Education at the University of Toronto. ■