

In Memoriam: Dr. Hajar Afsar Lajevardi MD, MSc, MS (1955-2015)

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Figure 1. Dr. Hajar Afsar Lajevardi

Medical community lost one of its gracious and care giving pioneers in the field of pediatrics, Hajar Afsar Lajevardi, MD, MSc, MS. Dr. Lajevardi dedicated her life to pediatric medicine and infectious diseases of children. She did creative and ground breaking work in the pediatric field of infectious disease along with basic science and devices for the development of the next generation of healthcare systems for infants and young mothers.

Hajar Afsar Lajevardi was born in Hamedan, Iran in 1955. Hamadān or Hamedān is the capital of Hamadan Province of Iran. Since the beginning of her childhood, she showed an increasing interest in medicine and cared about public health. Listening to her inspiration, she applied for medicine and was admitted to School of Medicine at Tehran University in 1971. Subsequent to obtaining her MD degree in 1979, she was admitted to anesthesiology department for residency in 1979. She worked on applying a new technique of anesthesiology and sedation to chil-

dren. After anesthesiology, Dr. Lajevardi continued her education and was admitted to Pediatrics residency program at Tehran University of Medical Sciences and graduated in 1981. Right after completion of residency, she began her sincere and care taking mission in pediatrics. Under Dr. Lajevardi's leadership, the pediatric station at branch 17 of Tamin Ejtemaiee grew into one of the nation's greatest pediatrics unit. Dr. Lajevardi was invited by Wisconsin Institute for Medical Research in fall of 2015 to share her knowledge about pediatrics and ophthalmology research. Unfortunately, she passed away before her visit and rests in peace in Tehran.

Because of her dedication and outstanding ability as a pediatrician, a group of researchers and clinicians formed a memorial foundation as "Dr. H. Afsar Lajevardi Research Cluster" DHALC. This Center will annually present a symposium to honor the memory of Dr. H. Afsar Lajevardi and demonstrating her highest level of excellence and commitment to care of children. The 1st HAL International Memorial Conference in conjunction with the 28th International Congress of Pediatrics was established with help of plenary speakers from many Universities including University of Washington, Wisconsin, Ohio, Wright state and Indiana on 21st October 2016 in Tehran Children's Hospital with more than 100 participants.

Here we asked immediate relative and close friends of Dr. Lajevardi to write a short note for her:

Rest in Peace to the most amazing, warm, strong, loving woman I have ever known. I cannot still believe she has passed at such an early age. Her strength was and will always be my inspiration as I meet with life challenges. I was blessed to have not only a wonderful mother but a loving, amiable, and supportive angel to raise me. Living under Iran-Iraq war and moving constantly to different places was hectic and crowded, but it was always home full of fun, love, friendship and family. Those years were a precious gift that I wouldn't trade for anything. As one of the first pediatricians in Iran, I and my brother have always received incredible care and rarely got sick. Medicine was always available at home and we received best of care from her as mother and pediatrician. I am grateful for all the support she has given me throughout my life. I always remember her saying nobody was lost because of her treatment

protocol and she was always proud of that all her patients were happy with the care they received. I still have many of her certificates and awards that she received during her fruitful working years, and I feel gratified that most people around the world remember her as great, kind and knowledgeable physician. In a word, I consider myself as a fortunate person that I had her as my mother. It is my hope that young people reading this might take measure of the angel, how she structured her extraordinary life, and the impact she had on her colleagues, friends and the world she worked to make it a little better.

Junior son of Dr. Hajar Afsar Lajevardi

Ali Mohammad Saghiri, BSc, MSc, PhD - Amir Kabir University

Dr.Hajar Afsar Lajevardi's death was a brutal lesson to me that life is so fickle. I wish that destiny had given this lesson to me in a different way; I know you are listening from the heavens above. There's nothing that I value more than your love. Regardless of where I am or what I am doing, your memories will always keep me smiling and bring me delightfulness.

I don't know how I can start; this huge unbelievable loss was not acceptable to me. I was raised under the training of the best mother, woman and physician that I have ever known. She always watched me like an eagle even with overseas distance. Almost everything that I have in my life, including apartment, car, and computer were purchased by her for the first time. It is impossible for me to have my carrier, job, social and professional networks without her great support. The sadness of not being around her and taking care of her in the last days of her precious life has oppressed my heart. She was available for me whenever I needed support regardless of the time and the place; I hope she forgives me for this catastrophic failure in my life. I feel guilty that I was not there by her side. She was a main part of my life and I miss her greatly and deeply. She had no hesitation to share phone number even home address with her patients. She always mentioned that we should relief pain from people as much as we can. I still receive calls from her patients in USA, Italy, Germany and Iran, and all share with me the golden memories that they had with my mother. I am really proud to be the son of Dr. Hajar Afsar Lajevardi. Your memories take me back to the time when I used to come back home crying from school. You always gave me a hug and said "Don't worry everything will be alright". You are no more but your words have empowered me to become the person that I am today.

I can never forget her kindness, patience and lessons she thought me not only as a mother but also as a professor and mentor. I owe much of my life to her. Most people can only dream about seeing an angel, but I had the pleasure of living with one my whole life, and remembering her after

she flew away into the heavens.

Senior son of Dr. Hajar Afsar Lajevardi

Mohammad Ali Saghiri, BSc, MSc, PhD - University of Wisconsin

The field of Pediatrics lost one of its great and caring physicians. I knew Dr. H Afsar Lajevardi very well during the last years of pediatric residency at Tehran University. We both shared the same interest and were among the first in our class. Later after graduation, I remained at Tehran University with teaching activity, while Afsar joined Tamin Ejtemaiee Organization. We had many discussions that it would be great if she could join the University, when she received her acceptance letter, as an assistant professor in the Pediatrics Department. I am glad that she decided to continue her practice at Tamin Ejtemaiee. She contributed to various societies and universities and her hard work benefited many. I recognize that Dr. Lajevardi was a very special person - decent, fun and caring, a good mix for all of us to aspire to.

Ali Rabbani, MD, Tehran University of Medical Sciences

I am deeply saddened by the loss of Dr. Lajevardi, a pioneer in Pediatric Medicine. Her tireless efforts to improve the lives of children are very admiring and appreciated by many of her patients and colleagues. We hope to keep Dr. Lajevardi's legacy alive and continue her efforts in making life better, especially for our pediatric patients. I am one of many who are grateful for her life and for her influence. She was as gracious as anyone I have ever met in my life. Her kind words and helpful comments were enormously uplifting and educational.

Nader Sheibani BSc, Msc, PhD - University of Wisconsin

I was saddened to hear about Dr. Hajar Afsar Lajevardi. She was an outstanding leader in pediatrics for both her scientific contributions and her sustained efforts to improve health of newborns and children in Iran and around the world. Those of us who had the good fortune to work with Afsar treasured her critical insights, imaginative approach, and personal support. While her loss is tragic, the beacon of hope and inspiration that she provided to so many will reverberate continuously in the scientific and clinical community. I extend my deepest condolences to all whom she helped during her marvelous life. Rest in peace - you have earned your reward for eternity.

James L. Gutmann, Cert Endo, PhD (h. c.), FICD, FACD, FADI, FAAHD, DIP ABE, Texas A and M University College of Dentistry.

I am heartbroken to hear that Dr. Lajevardi has passed away. Although she is no longer with us, I believe that most of her charity works still remain anonymous for most of us. I only found one of them accidentally 15 years ago during the Orthodontic symposium at Hamedan. I was informed that she had spent 6 times of her salary for a charity clinic for pregnant women and newborns at rural area of

Hamedan. It's amazing for me she kept this activity anonymous for nearly 15 years, and I am so proud to be her co-worker as well as learning how to be passionate and caring. The phrase hard working will always bring memories of our days working together.

Ahmad Sheibani Nia, DDS, MSc, Azad university

I am joining the long list of people who are heartbroken by the loss of Dr. Hajar Afsar Lajevardi. I have had the pleasure of working closely with her senior son, Mohammad Ali and heard about her many times. The first sentence to express myself after hearing of her loss was to say thank you for raising such a great son and giving us all the privilege of meeting and knowing him. From her biography, I learned that she was an accomplished pediatric educator, administrator, leader, patient advocate and wonderful colleague. Her unparalleled commitment to the teaching of pediatricians and making life better for her fellow human beings are the hallmarks of her career. She has worked to improve living conditions for people of every gender, race, income, and educational level. Suffice it to say that there will never be anyone else like her. She had some true, deep joie de vivre and the world will miss her tremendously.

Alireza Sadr, DDS, PhD, University of Washington

Her breadth of knowledge, experience, and contribution to medicine and research impressed her colleagues. She was born a true leader and excellent mentor for her students. Among several humanitarian personalities that she possessed, I can point out two of them that were apparent in all aspects of her precious life. The first one was her moral sense and honesty in medical treatments of her patients, and the second one was her dedication and kindness to her family and colleagues. I am sure that her patients will miss her deep affection and care taking responsibilities. She made the world a better place and continues to through those whose lives she touched.

Armen Asatourian, DDS - Dr. H. Afsar Lajevardi Research Cluster

Every person should leave something behind before it is time to go: A child, a book, a painting or maybe the merci and affection towards others, so his or her soul has somewhere to go. Dr. Hajar Afsar Lajevardi, your legacy is etched into the minds of others, and your story will be told and will be shared. I am privileged to know such an honorable person. She was noble. She lived her life contributing to improvement of the lives of others specially children. She did choose pediatrics because she realized the fragility and importance of children's lives. Dr. Lajevardi's vision in pediatric infectious diseases not only marked her own environment locally, but also internationally. She was among the key people who worked hard to develop the Pediatrics section of Tamin e Ejtemaai for comprehensive care of chil-

dren with severe infection. She did equally devote herself to her family taking care of her two beloved sons and they responsibly know very well that they have to pursue her path. We all miss her.

Amir Nazari, DDS, PhD, University of British Columbia



Figure 2.