



OBITUARY
Dr Bashir Mamdani MD
1945 – 2014

Dr. Bashir Mamdani hailed from Tanga in Tanzania. Like many others at the time, he came to India in search of education and graduated in medicine from the Seth GS Medical College and King Edward VII Memorial Hospital in Bombay. He obtained his MBBS in 1965.

In addition to learning the art and science of medicine, he also found the love of his life here. Bashir and Meenal met whilst agitating for justice for their professor of medicine, Dr FM Narielwala. Theirs was a marriage of minds and hearts.

Emigrating to the United States of America, Bashir specialised in nephrology and internal medicine, whilst Meenal opted for neurology. Bashir was awarded the Diplomate of the American Board of Internal Medicine and was recognised for his work by the American Board of Nephrology in 1981. He was appointed attending physician at Cook County Hospital, Chicago, in 1975 and was Deputy Chairperson of that institution's Department of Medicine in 1981. From 1986 onwards, he was Associate Professor of Medicine, cultivating a productive career as physician, teacher and researcher. Many patients benefited from his care. A generation of students and residents remain influenced by his exemplary care of patients and his teaching. Many remained his protégés long after they had quit the institution.

Bashir also contributed to the body of medical knowledge through his papers, which appeared in journals such as *JAMA*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Kidney International*, *Nephron* and *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

Despite making their home in America, Bashir and Meenal maintained a life-long connection with India and championed the cause of the poor in India through their sponsorship of projects aimed at improving their healthcare and education. In addition to providing funds, they made periodic visits to each site to monitor costs and efficacy of the programmes they had set up.

Bashir's second career blossomed after his retirement from Cook County Hospital. He could now develop his formidable skill in computer programming and, along with his brothers, indulge in their shared passion for cooking. He also developed his art of photography.

India, of course, was never far from his thoughts.

During their periodic visits to India, Bashir and Meenal had befriended the late Dr. Noshir H Antia, pioneer plastic surgeon and visionary, who would later carry out invaluable work in healthcare and welfare in rural India. They assisted him in many ways. The use of computers in Foundation for Medical Research and Foundation for Research in Community Health was facilitated by their support and guidance.

When the Forum for Medical Ethics Society was founded in Mumbai, they became enthusiastic and, inevitably, invaluable

members. Many were their contributions to what is now the *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*. Apart from publishing essays, commentaries and reviews in it, the Mamdanis pitched in to help with editorial work and support for computerisation.

Both Meenal and Bashir were infuriated by medical malpractice in India, the victims of which were so often those from the poorest strata of society. Together they worked hard to focus attention on wrongdoings and on developing the means for monitoring medical practice and disciplining those guilty of negligence.

In his papers published in this journal he wrote on a wide variety of topics including informed consent; support by the pharmaceutical and other industries for professional education in medicine (instead of covert bribery of physicians); the behaviour of a doctor who had erred in therapy or caused complications for his patient; unmasking medical myths; corruption in the governance of healthcare; facts behind the violence meted out by lay persons to doctors seen as inefficient or ineffective; placebos; health care in China; technology and the care of the dying patient; whether it is correct to test each patient for HIV infection on admission to hospital. The list goes on.

In another project in India, Bashir tried to set up a practice in Mumbai where he would offer second opinions when requested by patients and families. He declined to take over the treatment of patients due to the fact that he could stay in India for only part of each year. Unfortunately, he was far ahead of his time and the project had to be abandoned when promised support failed to materialise.

The cheer displayed by Bashir in the face of his crippling rheumatoid arthritis was inspiring and commanded admiration. None of those who worked with him, partook of his generous and warm hospitality, or traveled with him on holidays ever heard him complain of his worsening pain or deformity. He sought the best available treatment in his country of residence and diligently followed the advice given by his consultants on the use of drugs – which themselves caused considerable discomfort – exercise and later, surgery.

His final year was marred by rapid deterioration due to his arthritis and reduction of his mobility. Despite this, he remained productive; guiding and advising his correspondents, helping them in a variety of ways and writing for this journal. His death followed spinal fracture after a fall and severe respiratory illness. The devotion and care offered by Meenal, their children and grandchildren eased his distress to some extent.

Bashir is survived by his sons and their families and his beloved wife, Meenal. We wish them strength as they face their grievous loss.

Acknowledgements

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Dr. Bindu Desai kindly helped obtain Mr Mamdani's suggestions and transmitted them to me.

-- **Sunil K Pandya**

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