

Obituary

Late Prof Khalida Adeeb Khanum Akhtar

Professor Khalida Adeeb Khanum Akhtar a leading Gynaecologist and Obstetrician, an outstanding teacher, prolific writer, researcher, mentor, artist and above all an exceptional human being passed away on 16th Oct 2015. The cause of death was pneumonia leading to multi organ failure.

She was born at Rawalpindi on 28th Feb 1935. Her father was Prof Col Mohammad Zia Ullah FRCP (London), a senior consultant physician of the Indian Army Medical Corps in 40s and later professor of Medicine at the King Edward Medical College (KEMC) and Fatima Jinnah Medical College (FJMC), Lahore.

Prof Khalida A.K.Akhtar got her basic education at the Presentation Convent High School Rawalpindi and Sacred Heart Convent Lahore. She achieved outstanding performances in education at both the institutions and also made a mark in co-curricular activities. Her name is inscribed in the roll of honours of Sacred Heart Convent Lahore one having secured 105 marks out of 100 in mathematics. Extra 5 marks were awarded by the examiner for neatness. She won prizes in debates, art and home economics. Though petit in constitution, she won medals in the school sprint races.

In her formative years she developed keen interest in art like sketching, drawing, painting, embroidery, designing, sewing and décor which continued throughout her life. Many pieces of art adorn the rooms of her home and her artistic abilities are visible in the architecture of her house. In her professional life her drawings and surgical skills testified the fact that medicine is an art based on science. She was always dressed elegantly and correctly.

After doing her matric from Sacred Heart Convent in flying colors she joined Lahore College for Women from where she completed her F.Sc with high merits in 1952.

She got admission to Fatima Jinnah Medical College, Lahore in 1952 where she excelled in academics, got 1st position in 3rd professional MBBS of the Punjab University in 1956. In 1957 she topped the final MBBS examination of the Punjab University, Lahore- breaking all previous records- winning a tally of medals.

In the 1957 Punjab University Convocation, she received standing ovation. She completed three year training program in Obs/Gynae under Professor



Bilquis Fatima and Prof Asmat Qazi and 6 months of house job in Medicine and Surgery. She also had the benefit of learning vaginal fistula surgery from legendary Prof Col Sami (MS Punjab) of KEMC who was known as the 'GURU' i.e. father of Obs/Gynae of Pakistan. He was in charge of Lady Wellington Hospital Lahore. She helped many women with this problem in Nigeria and Pakistan.

Khalida got married to me on 28th Oct 1960 while I was working as a graded medical specialist and Staff surgeon at the Military Hospital Rawalpindi. We had a 55 year life partnership. It was an arranged marriage. Her father Prof. Col Zia Ullah and my father Col Nur Ahmad became friends while serving in the Indian Army Medical Corps, field hospital at the Italian theater of war.

After our marriage in 1961, the Royal College of Surgeons England held FRCS part 1 examination at Lahore which she passed in 1st attempt.

In 1962 I was seconded to the Nigerian Armed Forces Medical Services as a medical specialist. At that time the Nigerian Armed Forces was lead by a British General Sir Heyward - a World War II hero.

Obituary: Late Prof Khalida Adeeb Khanum Akhtar

Many officers and doctors were British and Foreigners from other countries. She was appointed, Gynaecologist at the Armed Forces Hospital Lagos (Capital at that time).

On my reversion to Pak Army in 1968, the Nigerian Head of Federal Military Govt and the Commander in Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces General Yaqubu Gowan wrote my performance report.

In addition to many superlative remarks he wrote” the officer should be congratulated for being a good ambassador of his country”. General Gowan further remarked that” without the mention of activities of his wife it will be unfair as she contributed in no small measure in making her husband what he is. Dr (Mrs.) K. M. Akhtar identified herself particularly with soldier’s families as a physician, a friend and a mother. She devoted most of her time to work in spite of the family commitments. The soldiers families in particular and the staff she worked with will always remember her and miss her greatly. We are going to miss their services very much and we hope that the authorities in Pakistan would allow them to come back to Nigeria again one day”. Nigerian Naval Chief Admiral Wey Christened his daughter’s name “Khalida”.



Prof. Khalida A.K. Akhtar proceeded to UK in 1969 for higher qualifications earned FRCS (Edin) and MRCOG London during her 15 months stay in UK. She earned respect of her seniors, colleagues and patients and was offered the job of consultant.

She joined me at Rawalpindi in 1970, got appointment of Chief Obs/Gynae Dept of the Holy Family Hospital (HFH) at that time a major Obs/Gynae facility at Rwp/Isb. She worked very hard and upgraded the Obs/Gynae dept working with missionaries with

missionary zeal. In these days Rawalpindi & Islamabad had a few gynaecologists.



She set up private medical practice on the pattern of the UK consultants, would book only five private patients by referrals-distribute other cases to her subordinates providing guidance or send back minor cases to the practitioners with remarks- not needing her advice. For addition of a single patient on her scheduled list some people would approach me and being a devoted wife would oblige me. She would spend 40 minutes for one consultation- take notes, keep records made explanations to the patients by making drawings. Once she refused to take fee for

Obituary: Late Prof Khalida Adeb Khanum Akhtar

the additional patient- her principle being not to charge a patient where she was unable to provide help. She kept special days for poor patients; she also helped her needy patients financially. This pattern continued throughout her career.

She had deep empathy, compassion, was charitable and generous. Also helped a lot of students financially. Every month she would pay her lowly paid staff. Entertained her junior staff at home.

She always kept herself updated in her profession by regularly studying journals, books, doing research, and writing, publishing and reading papers. She was adjudged an excellent teacher by her students. She was a gifted speaker since childhood- utilized it in lectures, bed side teaching- demonstrations, reading papers at the conferences. Held regular journal clubs with students utilized her artistic prowess in operative surgery. She had deep passion for teaching. Regularly held Obs/Gynae meetings- always contributing – just before her death chaired Obs/ Gynae conference of RWP/ISB chapter of Obs /Gynae society at the Armed Forces Post Graduate Institute auditorium.

As far back as 1972, she had established weekly post-graduate clinical and theoretical teaching sessions, not only for her own residents but also for many others from other civil as well as military hospitals. In 1974 she was appointed as an honorary instructor for obs/gynae FCPS trainees at the Armed Forces Medical College Rawalpindi (now AFGIMS).

She was awarded honorary rank of Colonel for teaching and providing consultation work to CMH/MH Obs/Gynae Dept. In 1976 she got the obs/gynae dept of Holy Family Hospital recognized for the FCPS qualification, long before Rawalpindi Medical College came into being. In 1989 she was instrumental in gifting Holy Family Hospital over to Rawalpindi Medical College and was appointed professor. She prepared the Obs/Gynae dept for full teaching services. In 1985, she established the first authentic Colposcopy Center at HFH, Rawalpindi.



She trained many post graduates for the MCPS, FCPS, a few for the MRCOG and one for Master of Surgery Punjab University with thesis on Colposcopy. She encouraged conceptual problem solving critical thinking learning- discouraged rote learning.

She always had a research project going on and authored over 100 papers published and read at conferences. She visited centers of excellence abroad to keep herself abreast with modern developments.

She always had keen interest in medical editing- was the chief editor of the Rawalpindi Medical College Journal(RMC journal) for 16 yrs. Editor in chief of Shifa, RMC student's magazine, editor of various periodicals. She published the first ever journal of Pak Society of Obs/Gynae in 1985 which is being published to date.

She has been regularly writing for the journals of Rawalpindi Medical College, Islamic International Medical College. She published the first scientific journal of Islamic International Medical College. She organized the first National multidisciplinary conference of Gynaecological Oncology at HFH Rawalpindi.

Became chief editor of the journal of Obs/Gynae putting in immense hard work, training and helping doctors in rewriting the articles. Had interest in history and art and wrote a column regularly on history of medieval times, old civilizations- South American, Egyptian, Chinese etc.



In 1984 she was awarded fellowship of the Royal College of Obs/Gynae London. She was elected fellow of Pakistan and National Academies of medical sciences and CPSP.

In 1986 she organized first National Colposcopy Conference at HFH Rawalpindi followed by a series of Colposcopy workshops conducted by her for the first time in the country.

She retired from the Rawalpindi Medical College in 1995. For a brief stint she worked as a consultant at KRL Hospital Islamabad.

In 1998 she was invited to be prof, head of Obs/Gynae dept of Islamic International Medical College which she founded - from where she retired in 2005.

In 2008 she received "Life Achievement Award" from Airways Media for her contribution to the society as an exemplary doctor and an inspiring teacher and mentor.

After retirement she continued her academic activities, teaching, writing etc. She taught post-graduate students (FCPS etc) at her residence voluntarily, holding sessions at the basement of her residence-attended by a large number of civilian and Army Gynaecologists.

She had special interest in libraries. She took keen interest in establishing a library of Obs/Gynae section at the Nigerian Armed Forces Hospital Lagos. She was in charge of the Holy Family Hospital Library under missionaries and later part of the Rawalpindi Medical College- made many improvements. She adorned the library premises with many

of her artistic drawings and paintings. She had a personal library consisting of professional books, journals and books on history and art.

She was very strict in teaching and patient care but a very kind examiner, described by her talented student Prof Rizwana Chaudhry as "iron lady with a heart of wax". She was scientific to her subject, humane to her patients with rich moral fiber and endless courage. She had uncompromising principles and convictions- meritocracy was her trade mark.

General Zia ul Haq's daughter was studying at Rawalpindi Medical College. She failed in Obs/Gynae. Many got concerned and approached her to pass her as this was the only subject she didn't clear but she did not change the result regardless of the fact that at that time my crucial Brig to Major General promotion board was also being held. She told Gen Zia ul Haq's daughter that it was in patient's interest and also in her that she acquired proficiency in the subject. After passing the exams, General Zia's daughter became her house surgeon and received further post graduate training in Obs/ Gynae. Gen Zia ul Haq paid a visit to the Holy Family Hospital and while speaking to the press he paid tribute to her by saying that "we need more Dr Khalida's".

As General Gowan's comments of her contributions during our stay at Nigeria, she continued to provide support in my career in Pakistan.

In 1970, East Pakistan doctors left Pakistan and there were very few doctors at Rawalpindi Military establishment. She had all the burden of house hold work- making me free to devote my time to my vast professional responsibilities, Clinical Teaching and Administration. I taught Clinical Medicine, Clinical Pharmacology to MBBS classes, FCPS I and II and Preventive Medicine to post graduates (MPH), published four books- one Rational Therapeutics 1995 edition won national book foundation award, over 200 publications due to her support and help. We built our house at Race Course Road Rawalpindi and she did everything in its completion. She looked after all my needs sparing me completely for my professional work. I did not do private practice until a few years before my retirement from the Army and that too a very limited one.

Obituary: Late Prof Khalida Adeb Khanum Akhtar

On her passing away, condolence messages from her students and patients poured in from all over the world. Her students wrote tributes and poems for their beloved teacher.

She was religious but had no bigotry. She had humility and deep empathy-mother of all virtues. She treated her patients as VVIPs. She was affectionately called "Appa Khalida" during her student days. She had her share of misogynistic/ political victimization in a patriarchal society which she endured patiently and courageously.

She was a woman of substance and style. She dealt with two major tragedies in her life with a lot of patience and became a back bone for the rest of the family. She had a beautiful soul which lit everyone around her. She always exuded positive energy no matter what were the circumstances. She was a role model, a living legend and will continue to enlighten lives of people even after leaving this world for her heavenly abode.

***MAY HER SOUL REST IN ETERNAL PEACE AMEN
FOREVER IN MY HEART, PRAYERS AND THOUGHTS***

**Lt Gen Prof Emeritus Mahmud Ahmad Akhtar
Former Surgeon General Army/DGMS (IS)
Principal Army Medical College**

