

**History of Contemporary Medicine in Iran****The Role of Professor Khosrow Nasr (1937-2020) in Academic Promotion of Shiraz University School of Medicine, 1968 to 1987**Mohammad Hossein Azizi MD<sup>1\*</sup><sup>1</sup>Academy of Medical Sciences of the I.R. of Iran, Tehran, Iran

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**“A teacher is like a candle that consumes itself to light the way for others”.**

With profound sadness, in January 2020, Professor Khosrow Nasr, the former Dean of Shiraz University Medical School, Iran, passed away after a fruitful life in California, USA at the age of 82. His demise is a great loss for the Iranian medical community, particularly in Shiraz.

**Brief Biography**

After elementary and high school education, young Khosrow entered Yale University and received B.S degree in 1958. Afterward, he enrolled in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University and obtained his MD certificate in 1962. He completed his internship and first year residency training from 1962 to 1964.

After that, he continued the residency in internal medicine at University of Chicago from 1964 to 1966. In subsequent years, during 1966 and 1968, Dr. Nasr completed his postgraduate studies in gastroenterology (Figure 1).

Upon his return to Iran in 1968, he joined the faculty of Shiraz University School. Because of his outstanding competence, Professor Nasr was initially elected by his colleagues as the chair of department of internal medicine

from 1968 to 1972. Next, he served as Director of Nemazee University Hospital in Shiraz in 1972, and in due course, as Dean of Shiraz Medical School (Figure 2). Later, he and his colleagues founded medical schools in two cities in Fars Province; Fasa and Jahrom in 1977, both of which were initially supervised by Shiraz School of Medicine. He was the first dean of the Fasa School of Medicine. Between 1981 and 1987, Professor Nasr moved to Tehran and practiced privately as a gastroenterologist at



**Figure 1.** Professor Nasr's Childhood and Graduation Photographs.



**Figure 2.** Professor Khosrow Nasr and His Colleagues in His Office, Shiraz School of Medicine, 1970s.

Arad Hospital. His medical career continued in the United States in Roseville, California until his illness.

### Views of Professor Nasr Colleagues

His former colleague Professor Faramarz Ismail-Beigi, the former chairman of medicine department, wrote, "After leaving Shiraz, we worked closely in Arad Hospital, and in Khosrow Nasr's typical fashion, he helped set up weekly educational conferences for the staff. In the United States, he has been active in practice of gastroenterology. But his love for education has remained alive and he continues to set up yearly post-graduate courses and meetings in Northern California"<sup>1</sup>

Other colleagues of Professor Nasr also viewed him as a superb physician, a generous mentor, consummate clinician and a true nobleman. He was also an outstanding medical manager, a trusted friend with deep love for his patients and mentees. Dr. Asghar Rastegar who served as Professor of Internal Medicine at Shiraz Medical School during the same period wrote, "During the past forty years, I have had the privilege of working with many outstanding leaders in academic medicine in Iran and the United States. I still consider Khosrow Nasr and Faramarz Ismail-Beigi as among the top individuals I have had the privilege of working with in my professional life."<sup>2</sup>

As a tribute to several former distinguished mentors of the Shiraz School of Medicine, between 2012 and 2019, ceremonies were held for six pioneering professors in Tehran and Shiraz and a five-volume set of ceremony books were published. On Thursday April 26, 2012, when the first ceremony was held in Shariati Hospital, Tehran, in honor of Professor Faramarz Ismail-Beigi, Professor Nasr sent a message and pointed out, "I am unfortunately unable to participate in this wonderful celebration, recognizing the contributions made by my close colleague and friend, Dr. Faramarz Ismail-Beigi to the Shiraz University Medical School. There is no question that the success of the Shiraz model of medical education is due to the work of many individuals; however, the leadership provided by Dr. Ismail-Beigi was critical to this success. Dr. Ismail-Beigi set the standard for the department and became a living model of an academic physician for the younger faculty, residents and students"<sup>2</sup>.

In the second ceremony which was held in Shiraz in honor of Professor Nasr and Professor Asghar Rastegar (Figure 3), in the ceremony book (Figure 4), Professor Faramarz Ismail-Beigi wrote, "He [Professor Nasr] is a great communicator who thinks positively and always considers what can be done instead of why things cannot be done. As the chairman of the Department of Medicine, he welcomed me to Shiraz and the School and made every effort to make sure that my family and I were comfortable and well-settled. Mostly due to his demeanor and attitude, there was great warmth and friendship in the Department. I could feel the happiness of the Departmental faculty

because they were active and valued members of a larger family. Then, later in 1972, he accepted the position of the head of Nemazee Hospital and I was elected as the chairman of the Department. Nevertheless, in his new position, he was always helpful and helped me establish myself as head of the department. Dr. Nasr is a problem-solver. There is hardly any difficulty or issue that he will not attempt to solve; at times the problems are outside the realm of Medicine or Education. He gives one the feeling that you too can solve difficult problems; he empowers. He is imaginative, thinks expansively, thinks creatively, and always looks at the bright side of issues. His political view can be described as enlightened, kind, humanistic, and benevolent. His inner happiness leads him to great optimism, and the optimism he manifests in his approach and thinking is quite infectious. I tried to find solutions for his optimistic suggestions since I knew that the suggestions had come from his warm heart and reflected his overt kindness and enthusiasm to help. He was a great and effective administrator. During the years when he was head of the Nemazee Hospital, we communicated almost on a daily basis. When he was making plans to expand the hospital, I was called to help in the design of the large research wing. Then, when he became Dean of the School of Medicine, the educational programs of the entire school became more rigorous and scientifically based. He explored new educational models and programs and helped make



Figure 3. From Left: Professor Faramarz Ismail-Beigi, Professor Nasr and Professor Asghar Rastegar.

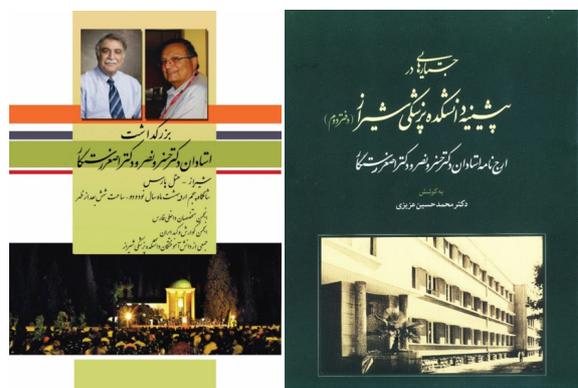


Figure 4. The Poster and Book of Ceremony of Professors Nasr and Rastegar, Shiraz - April 2013 (Poster designer: Ms. Baharah Rajaei).<sup>4</sup>

the School become internationally respected and a very strong (if not the strongest) School and Department of Medicine in the entire Middle East region”.<sup>1</sup>

### Professor Nasr's View on Shiraz Medical School

He wrote the history of foundation and development of Shiraz Medical School in 2009. He believed that achievements of the school of medicine in Shiraz were based on six pillars:

- “English, as the institutional language in Shiraz School of Medicine;
- The development of a modern and well-equipped hospital—the Nemazee Hospital;
- The third pillar was the bylaws that were enacted with establishment of the former Pahlavi University;
- The young energetic full-time faculty members;
- The city itself. Shiraz was not only an attractive city, but it also openly welcomed non-Shirazis.
- The last pillar was the students. They were not only smart, but also willing to accept change. They were enthusiastic about learning and were able to keep up with all the educational challenges that came their way”.<sup>3</sup>

### Selection of Shiraz School of Medicine by the World Health Organization

Professor Nasr wrote, “Another event that had a significant impact on our educational programs was selection of Shiraz School of Medicine by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a WHO Regional Teacher Center for the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean Region. At that time, there were six such centers in the world and to the best of my knowledge, the center in Shiraz was the only one which has been considered “successful.”<sup>3</sup>

### Village health workers training program

Another success of Professor Nasr and his colleagues, particularly Professor Hossein Ali Ronaghi, was development of a program for training “Village Health Workers” known as *Behdar*. Professor Nasr states, “Our Department of Community Medicine developed programs for village health workers to train “*Behdar*” for Iranian villages. This required extensive research focusing on the health needs of the people living in small villages of Fars and the type of healthcare worker that could respond to this need. This included defining competencies needed by these individuals in both public health and therapeutic medicine. This program has now become the model for the health network in Iran and has been copied in other parts of the world”.<sup>3</sup>

### Professor Nasr, a Pioneer of Problem-Based Learning Method

He was an expert in medical education and one of the pioneers of the new modalities of medical teaching

primarily focused on an approach known as ‘problem-based learning’. Professor Ismail-Beigi states, “Later, starting before and continuing after the Revolution, Dr. Nasr was spending more time in educational activities personally, helped with setting up new Schools of Medicine in Jahrom and Fasa, and was enthusiastically implementing problem-based education. There were many student-initiated learning activities... This model of education has now become popular in outstanding medical schools internationally”<sup>1</sup> (Figure 5).

### Professor Nasr as a Researcher

Alongside education of residents and students and administrative affairs (as director of the Nemazee Hospital and Dean of medical School), he was a prolific writer and an active researcher. Some of the articles written by Professor Nasr and his colleagues that are indexed in the PubMed database include:

1. Kharazmi A, Rezai MH, Abadi P, **Nasr K**, Haghghi P, Haghshenas M. T and Blymphocytes in alpha-chain disease. *Br J Cancer*. 1978; 37(1):48-54.
2. Haghshenas M, Haghghi P, Abadi P, Kharazmi A, Gerami C, **Nasr K**. Alpha heavy-chain disease in southern Iran. *Am J Dig Dis*. 1977; 22(10):866-73.
3. Haghghi P, **Nasr K**, Mohallatee EA, Ghassemi H, Sadri S, Nabizadeh I, Sheikholeslami MH, Mostafavi N. Colorectal polyps and carcinoma in Southern Iran. *Cancer*. 1977; 39(1):274-88.
4. Kharazmi A, Haghghi P, Haghshenas M, **Nasr K**, Abadi P, Rezai HR. Alpha-chain disease and its association with intestinal lymphoma. *Clin Exp Immunol*. 1976; 26(1):124-8.
5. **Nasr K**, Haghghi P, Bakhshandeh K, Abadi P, Lahimgarzadeh A. Primary uppersmall-intestinal lymphoma. A report of 40 cases from Iran. *Am J Dig Dis*. 1976; 21(4):313-23.
6. **Nasr K**, Haghghi P, Abadi P, Lahimgarzadeh A, Hedayati H, Halstead JA, Reinhold JD. Idiopathic enteropathy: an evaluation in rural Iran with an appraisal of nutrient loss. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 1976;



**Figure 5.** Professor Nasr, Medical Education Workshop, Shiraz, 1970s (Courtesy of Dr. Mitra Amini and colleagues).<sup>3</sup>

29(2):169-76.

When in 1970, the first international medical English journal of Shiraz School of Medicine was founded by Professor Karim Vessal, Professor Nasr was a member of its editorial board. The Journal was indexed at “Index Medicus” (Figure 6).

Lastly, a brief eulogy for Professor Nasr written by Dr. Rastegar, Professor of Nephrology at Yale School of Medicine, that was read at Professor Nasr’s funeral on January, 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020 is presented here:

“Although Khosrow passed away last week, his memory remains not only in the loving family he left behind, his wife Shiva, his children Rasa and Nava and his grandchildren, but also in many lives he touched, his many patients both in Iran and in the US and most importantly, his students and colleagues. Khosrow was one of the many Iranians trained in the best institutions abroad who always dreamed of returning to their homeland to serve. As a graduate of some of the best institutions in the US (Yale, Columbia and Chicago), Khosrow could have led a successful career in an academic center in the US. He chose otherwise and decided to join the faculty in Shiraz and help lead that institution in what is considered to be a golden period; training many who went on to successful careers including leadership roles in institutions both in Iran and abroad. His success was due to his unique style of leadership; thoughtful, creative, visionary but always mixed with a sense of humility. While committed to the goal of the institution, he cared deeply about each individual, from the one who cleaned his office to each student, resident and faculty. He had a restless intellect. While holding multiple leadership roles in Shiraz, he recognized the need for better health care in small and often neglected towns, and therefore, supported several successful projects to deal with this problem including developing a unique institution in Fasa to serve these communities. Needless to say, in addition to his excellence as an academic leader, Khosrow was a brilliant clinician and teacher. On a personal level, Khosrow was a mentor to me when I joined the faculty at a young age, helping me think more broadly, and supporting me in my own development. His mentorship has marked all I have done since, both in Iran and around the world. I always counted on his wise counsel, both as a colleague in Shiraz but more importantly as a life-long friend” (Figure 7).

#### Conflict of Interest Disclosures

None.

#### Ethical Statement

Not applicable.



**Figure 6.** The first issue of the medical journal of Shiraz School of Medicine, January 1970 (Courtesy of Professor Bahram Azadeh).



**Figure 7.** Professors Nasr and Rastegar and their Colleagues and Some of the Shiraz Medical Graduates, Shiraz (Courtesy of Dr. Raees Jalali).

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