

PAKISTAN PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY - A REFLECTION OF EARLY YEARS

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It is nostalgic to recall formative years of the society for the reason that we psychiatrists met in different cities of West and the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to ponder and agree to establish this society.

We should be grateful to the Pakistan Medical Association, our national and parent body, because it was during its annual and biennial conferences that few of us psychiatrists first met to share our frustrations regarding the state of mental health and psychiatric profession in our country.

At a time when our morale was at its lowest ebb and in an attempt to overcome our inhibitions, we, during one of the bigger ventures of Pakistan Medical Association, the joint meeting of Pakistan Medical Association and British Medical Association, met to discuss the possibility of organising ourself. It was at the lawns of the Boat Club, on a sunny afternoon of a cold December, in 1966, that we used the hospitality of Dr Afzal Habib. Besides the host, those present included the late Dr G. A. Asghar, Dr Zaki Hasan, Dr H.A.G. Kazi, Dr Iftikhar, Dr Raihana Beg and the writer Dr Farrukh Hashmi from U.K. also attended.

The salient features of our discussion were:

1. In developing countries, where a variety of killing and crippling diseases are still rampant, mental illnesses are given the lowest priority. It is less likely that the planners can be attracted, or convinced, to make resources available for those who suffer silently.
2. There are very few psychiatrists in Pakistan and the enormity of the problem was clearly visible to all of us.
3. We ourself were also inhibited and used to hide behind such terms as Neuropsychiatry, Neurophysician and Mental Health.

Nonetheless, the historic decision was taken, and we decided to organise ourself as psychiatrist. This author was elected convenor and assigned the task of drawing the policy, the aim and objectives, call meetings and develop a consensus of the psychiatrists from both the wings of Pakistan and a constitution.

Everyone was enthusiastic, and my task appeared simple. The Pakistan Medical Association meetings again came to my rescue and between scientific sessions and sight-seeing, I would drag colleagues to sit down and talk. It became a regular feature at Pakistan Medical Association conferences at Karachi, Hyderabad, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Dhaka and Chittagong.

THE PHILOSOPHY

At every meeting, we will discuss an aspect of our task, though many of us wondered as to why do we have to meet so frequently? To many colleagues, the purpose remained hazy, but these meetings brought us together. The initial fears and apprehensions were ironed out, and we became a friendly crowd. If our new colleagues have not appreciated, it is worth quoting the aim and objective: "To inculcate brotherly feelings and spirit of comradeship among fellow psychiatrists". My greatest fear was that it could break before we could put it together.

In time every one of us came to be convinced that this is one organization which is not established to promote a person or personality. It was genuine and was oriented in the service of psychiatry.

The most significant policy perception was that the planners and providers of health will never appreciate the nature and size of the problem. We will have to approach it differently. First, it is our own medical profession which is to be made aware through continuing education. At that time there existed no formal teaching in medical college except for a few lectures at Dow Medical College, (Karachi) and King Edward Medical College (Lahore).

Secondly, and most important of all, it was necessary to educate people. Once people are made aware, they will take care and the services will have to be provided.

THE ORGANISATION

This narrative is only to give some background information to the documented minutes of the meetings which, in my opinion, is the history of Pakistan Psychiatric Society. Reproduced below is a selection from the minute book.

DHAKA

During the PMA Conference, on November 16, 1968 at Dhaka a meeting of Psychiatrists in East Pakistan and those attending from West Pakistan was held. The following attended: Dr.N.D. Chaudhry (E.Pak), Dr. R. Rehman, (E.Pak.), Dr. Samad (E.Pak.) Dr. Fakhruddin (E.Pak.) Dr.Rashid Chaudhry (W.Pak.) Dr. Zaki Hasan (W.Pak.) Dr. Iftikhar Akhter (W.Pak.) and Dr. S. Haroon Ahmed (W.Pak).

The proposed agenda included amendments to the draft Constitution and suggestions for the office bearers to be finalized in a General Body Meeting in Karachi.

A letter from Col. M. H. Shah regarding article 2a of Part II was considered and decision taken.

A detailed discussion on various aspects of Psychiatric Services in Pakistan was held in a friendly atmosphere. It was agreed that in view of the difficulties the members from East Pakistan may not be able to participate, but similar meeting should be held in Karachi inviting members from West Pakistan.

KARACHI

A general body meeting will be held on Saturday, the March 01, 1969 at 3.00 p.m. at P.M.A. House, Garden Road, Karachi. The Agenda:

As decided and in continuation of the meeting held at Dhaka, on 16-11-1968, a general body meeting of the Pakistan Psychiatric Society was held on Saturday March 01, 1969 at the P.M.A. House, Garden Road, Karachi. Col. M.H. Shah was in the Chair and the following members attended:

1. Col. M. H. Shah
2. Dr. G. A. Asghar
3. Dr. Iftikhar Akhter
4. Dr. Riahana Beg
5. Dr. Zaheer Khan
6. Dr. IjlalMazhari
7. Dr. Afzal Habib
8. Dr. K. Zaki Hasan
9. Dr. Nayyer Azam
10. Dr. Zainab Hasan
11. Dr. Anwar Balkhi
12. Dr. Adam Memon
13. Dr. S. Haroon Ahmed (Convenor)

A brief resume of the decisions taken in December, 1966 to form the Pakistan Psychiatric Society and of the subsequent efforts in this direction, was given by Dr. Haroon Ahmed. The work of the Ad-Hoc Committee and the decisions of the meeting held in November, 1968 at Dhaka was also presented. This followed the discussion on the next item on the agenda i.e., the election of the office bearers. The convenor informed the house about the recommendations made by the meeting held in November, 1968 at Dhaka. The names of the office bearers were proposed and a unanimous confirmation was achieved. Dr. Adam Memon proposed the name of Col. M. H. Shah as the President. In spite of a popular demand, he withdrew his name. The office bearers were then unanimously elected as proposed and seconded by the members. They are as under:

President	Dr. S.M. Afzal Habib
Vice President	Dr. N.D. Chudhary (E.P)
Vice President	Dr. Rashid Chaudhry (W.P)
Secretary	Dr. Iftikhar Akhtar (W.P)
General	
Joint Secretary	Dr. R. Rehman (E.P)
Treasurer	Dr. Rehana Baig (W.P)
Five Members	Dr. Samad (E.P), Dr. Farhana Hussain (E.P), Dr. Tahir Chaudhry (E.P), Dr. G. Asghar (W.P), and Dr. K. Zaki Hasan (W.P)

Note: E.P.= East Pakistan; W.P.=West Pakistan

The discussion on the future activities was brief and it was left to the executive committee to chalk out a plan. The meeting was adjourned with a vote of thanks to the chair.

"I take this opportunity to thank the members of the Ad-Hoc Committee who have helped me in giving a final shape to the constitution of the Pakistan Psychiatric Society. I also wish to congratulate the newly elected office bearers and foresee a bright future for the Society under their able leadership" (Sd/- S. Haroon Ahmed)

If you notice in the first elected Executive Committee, I was not the first Secretary General It was reposed in the hands of Dr. Iftikhar Akhter.

Then there was a big gap of four years from 1969 - 1973. During this period the only activity was that Dr. Iftikhar Akhter conceived and produced our beautiful logo. Dr. Iftikhar Akhter went to U.K. for his membership in 1971. Then Dr. Afzal Habib who was well settled in Pakistan re-migrated to USA. The country was passing through severe political crises which eventually led to the greatest tragedy and we lost Eastern Wing and all the members there.

REVIVAL OF PPS

The Pakistan Psychiatrist Society became an orphan without its main office bearers. I could not see our labour lost and got in touch with Prof. M. Rashid Chaudhry, the vice president to call a meeting after four years. At a general body meeting on December 8, 1973, Dr Afzal Habib's resignation was accepted with a vote of thanks to the first President of the Society.

At this meeting Dr Rashid Choudhry, Senior Vice President, was elected as President, Dr M. Shafique as senior Vice President and Dr HAG Kazi Vice President. And this time I offered to be elected as Secretary General.

The meeting was attended by 17 members, which accounted for 80% of the total membership from all over Pakistan.

The newly elected Secretary General was tasked with getting the society registered, as we cannot function without registration. Pakistan Psychiatric Society was registered on 17th February 1973 under the Registration Act XXI of 1860.

At a meeting of the executive committee held at the newly established Department of Psychological Medicine at the Central Government Hospital, Rawalpindi, headed by newly arrived Dr Malik Mubbashir, a visionary and a great asset. He was responsible for Mental Health Ordinance 2001 at a Biennial Conference in Islamabad. This meeting was to decide about a psychiatric conference. Major time of our meeting was spent in deciding whether to call it a Psychiatric or Mental Health conference, the label "Psychiatric" could scare people away. Our young colleagues were adamant, and we went ahead to call a spade a spade. Then the problem of finances was posed. One of our well-meaning and generous members very sincerely offered to stand the bill. In his opinion, we were hardly 20 to 25 psychiatrists, and a conference meant a dinner and coffee break. He generously offered Rs.5,000/-. But the first psychiatric conference was conceived eventually in accordance with our philosophy. Dr. Haroon was elected as Chairman and the venue was decided to be Karachi.

An organising committee was constituted, that pondered on the format of the First Conference. We being very few, an idea was floated to invite a newly set up college of Family Medicine (promoted by PMA and headed by Dr. S. H. Naqvi)

The college readily agreed to hold their First Congress in collaboration with PPS. Our first objective was achieved as their participation become starting point of continuing medical education in psychiatry to GP (Family Physician). The second important decision was to make it international. We were encouraged to make the event international after encouragement from the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Our second objective was predictability achieved when the first conference became an international affair and a focus of public attention through mass media. The first psychiatric conference in 1975 was a moving example of our fear and hope.

The First International Psychiatric Conference of PPS and First National Congress of College of Family Physicians was held in 1975 attended by over 200 members of college and psychiatrists from all over Pakistan and from abroad. The Royal College was represented by Dr Warren, Vice President of Royal College of Psychiatrists, Prof. Linford Rees, Dr and Mrs Phillip Rack and Dr Baashir of WHO, etc.

It was only possible by full cooperation and help by our colleagues from all over the country. specially, Karachi (Dr. Zafar Qureshi, Dr. Unaiza Niaz, GP's and many more).

The Conference was of three days and each day was dedicated for Anxiety Disorder, Depression and Schizophrenia, besides lectures by eminent guests. The special features were groups of family physicians, who were sensitized earlier to be facilitators for the workshops on the three disorders. A psychiatrist was present as an observer.

This description of the first conference is for the benefit of our young psychiatrists. This event was followed by one annual and a biennial conference in different major cities of Pakistan.

THE DARK PERIOD

In early 1988 Prof. Rashid Chaudhry, a great human being and a member of a core group who conceived Pakistan Psychiatric Society, while discussing affairs of PPS. asked me contest for presidentship in 1988 elections. He did not allow me to any excuse. The next biennial conference was scheduled in Karachi in December 1988.

The election for the office bearers for the term of December, 1988 to December 1990 were held as per regulation at the Seventh Biennial General Body meeting according to agenda. The following were elected bearers:

Prof. Syed Haroon Ahmed	President
Dr. Ijaz Haider	Vice Presidents
Dr. Habib Ullah Chaudhry	
Dr. Inam ur Rehman	General Secretary
Dr. Abul Faizi	Joint Secretary cum Treasurer
Dr. Khalida Tareen	Joint Secretary
Prof. Zaheer Khan	Executive Committee
Dr. Nurjehan Hussain	
Dr. Irshad Qazi	
Dr. Abul Faizi	
Dr. Muhammad Arif	
Dr. Rubina Anjum	
(Dr. Saad Bashir Malik was declared elected in place of Dr. Abul Faizi on his resignation from the Executive Committee)	

A General Body on Friday December 1988, considered amendments received earlier as per constitution. However, an amendment to the constitution was raised from the floor to shift rotate headquarter from Karachi to Lahore or to a venue of the biennial conference. It was explained that this cannot be taken up now. It should be properly drafted and routed properly which can be taken up at a special G.B later

However, this divided the house and few ill-advised members refused to accept my presidentship. A court case was instituted at Sindh High Court to give stay order (in January 1989 to invalidate the election 1988). The court denied (appendix | Box 3) as para 7 of our reply).

A seminar was announced to celebrate 150 years of psychiatry at Lahore by "breakaway group" on 7th and 8th September 1989 using the platform of Pakistan Psychiatric Society. We contested this in the court of senior civil judge, Lahore. But to me this was a breakup of PPS into Karachi and Lahore.

In spite of emotional colleagues in Karachi, I decided to save PPS, withdrew all court cases unilaterally, resigned as president (January 1990) and at an executive committee meeting at Karachi I inducted vice president Dr. Habibullah Chaudhry as President. The meeting advised Secretary General Dr. Inamur Rehman to issue a notice to prepare the amendments to be circulated as per constitution.

FAST FORWARD

January 1990, I resigned as President PPS and decided to distance myself. To my satisfaction, it worked and PPS was organising its 20th biennial conference. It thrived but heavily depended on pharma industry to the extent that I am witness to a paper being presented provided by a leading industry which looked like selling one of their products by no less than the chairman of the conference.

Full text in Box 2

Appendix 1. is the reply by advocate Sair and Bashir (Lahore), Appendix 2. Letter of resignation of the Dr. Haroon Ahmed Appendix 3. Reply of Dr. Rashid Chaudhry in response to resignation.

After almost quarter of a century. Prof. Raza ur Rehman, Chairman of the 20th Biennial conference at Karachi, 2014 requested me to be a Patron of the event. I agreed on one condition that he will get the account audited, and he readily agreed. This condition was put forth because I was aware that the accounts were not audited (except till seventh conference 1988 available in box No. 2). During the conference, I did raise the point that there should be an office and an address where all valuable material of last 40 odd conferences should be available.

After the conference Dr. Raza ur Rehman informed me that the accounts have been audited by email because I was on holiday in Spain. On return he surprised me when he gave the audited accounts. After the payments of all bills, the net saving was a huge Rs: 1,1950,000/- (one crore nineteen lacs fifty thousand rupees). All credit to Prof. Raza ur Rehman (Box 2).

The organising committee of the conference agreed to Raza's suggestion that he wanted to use this amount to survey morbidity of mental illness in Sindh and if possible, Pakistan.

I submitted whatever material I had to the President of PPS at the time, Prof. M. Iqbal Afridi to set up an Archive of the society.

Some members of PPS will have to fill the gap between 1990 and now. This is my version (where the court cases in the dark period have been abridged) and if the senior wishes to correct this account, they are welcome.

(3rd August 2020)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am grateful to Prof. Afzal Javed for his recognition of late Prof. Rashid Chaudhry's and my contribution to PPS as Founding Officers, and Prof. Raza ur Rahman's endeavours for transparency and professionalism in PPS. He also recommended an amendment to the PPS Constitution for a formal clause of transparency and account's audit, and formally requested the President and President-Elect holding office to add it to the agenda for the PPS General Body Meeting at Quetta in 2016.

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