



Doctor Nazir Naimy, MD, PhD, a practicing colorectal and abdominal surgeon at Akershus University Hospital, University of Oslo, Norway, recently returned from a six week trip from Kabul, Afghanistan. He visited various teaching hospitals and clinics in Afghanistan. He has made similar trips previously to Afghanistan. A short report of Dr. Naimy's observation and proposal for betterment of healthcare education and health services provision which we share. The DFA Team thanks Dr. Naimy for his dedication and services. Naser Oria

## **Doctors for Afghanistan (DFA) Mission Statement**

### **Goal:**

To facilitate and assist in improving health education and quality of health services in Afghanistan.

### **Mission:**

Doctors for Afghanistan (DFA) is a nonprofit, non-political, independent organization consisting of patriotic Afghan medical professionals from around the world. The goal of DFA is to assist in the improvement of medical education and betterment of health services in Afghanistan.

Currently, DFA is providing medical education through furnishing medical lectures in native languages in the form of video lectures, texts, etc through “Doctors for Afghanistan” website, Youtube channels, Telegram, DFA group and “Doctors for Afghanistan” Facebook page.

Furthermore DFA provides clinical consultations online to medical professionals in Afghanistan through email, Skype and other feasible means such as sending medical lectures through thumb drives, hard drives and CDs which does not need internet access. Besides providing medical education, members of the DFA regularly travel to Afghanistan and for exchange of ideas and sharing professional knowledge, expertise and clinical experiences with health care professionals in Afghanistan, aiming to standardize health care practices in Afghanistan.

### **Overview and objectives:**

As we all know, the ongoing war and insecurity in Afghanistan has affected every sector of our country including health education and health care system.

Public hospital services are lagging behind because of lack of financial and managerial resources.

Although it is unrealistic to expect that the government will be able to provide standard modern hospital services to the public in the foreseeable future due to financial and managerial problems, however no political system will be sustainable without providing the public with basic hospital services of reasonable quality.

As any other sector, public hospital (PH) services are dependent on several components; including human resources, finance, management and proper supervising authorities.

Regarding human resources, Afghanistan has been gradually depleted of its medical professionals (MP), including doctors, nurses, medical technicians, pharmacists, lab technicians, public health professionals, managers and other technical and service staff in the last forty years. We are aware that our MPs in Afghanistan are very talented and hard working, however they are grappling to catch up with world standards of medical care due the four decade of war and chaos. This is due to many obstacles, including lack of financial resources and inadequacy of educational institutions with international standards.

Regarding finances, one suggestion is that Afghan government allocate more funds to public hospitals and concurrently persuade governmental and private donors for more financial assistance with responsible management.

While the international community has helped Afghanistan to a great extent in primary healthcare sector and maternal and child health, the hospital sector have been largely neglected. There are unexplored possibilities for inter-institutional (university to university and hospital to hospital) collaboration in cooperation with Afghan diaspora worldwide, which will help in reducing this gap.

In order to cope with the above and other similar problems, we can focus on human resources and what role Afghan MPs can play in this regard. As we are aware a significant portion of manpower in the medical field has left Afghanistan due to war and instability. These professionals have relocated to other countries including Europe and USA, and fortunately many of them were able to advance their expertise in their professions. Furthermore, luckily a majority of these professionals are willing to share their knowledge and experiences with their colleagues in Afghanistan, in order to improve the standard of health practice in the country. Several trips of members of DFA to Afghanistan is an example of such willingness for serving our people and contributing to development of the Afghan health sector.

There are many other similar Afghan organizations and individuals around the world who have and are willing to contribute to this great cause, and DFA feels strongly that coordinating and mobilizing such manpower and taking advantage of these resources will be very beneficial for the improvement of health education and healthcare services to our nation.

DFA is willing to take the lead to encourage, facilitate and organize Afghan healthcare professionals living abroad to return as volunteers for short and long term trips to facilitate this great cause.

Organizing and facilitating such a process would not be possible without ownership, sustained and strong support from the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, to coordinate and accommodate these visits inside the country. Providing a friendly and safe working environment of mutual cooperation to utilize their time and skills efficiently will be very crucial.

However, the question is that how can Afghan government contribute to make this mission smoother:

**Following are some suggestions:**

1. The Afghan government can establish a focal point office in Kabul in order to organize and coordinate these visits, arrange and assign MPs to the relevant hospitals during their stay in Afghanistan. Also providing a safe accommodation and inner city transportation between facilities during their stay in the country.
2. In order to absorb medical professionals in Afghanistan, there is need to select a few hospital and universities, which should be closely interconnected in a way that they cover most of the medical disciplines/specialties. This may require the reorganization of some existing hospitals or potentially a newly built, highly specialized institution.
3. The Afghan government should establish an institution/hospital to serve as a gold standard, both for private and public hospitals. This proposed organization can also be the solution for the challenge of setting up a universal standard for both private and public hospitals. Establishing a standard will aid in setting a baseline for evaluation of the program. The selected hospitals/institutions should be equipped and organized in such a way that would make them suitable for theoretical and practical education of modern medicine.
4. Overall, the office of the President or Ministry of Foreign Affairs should send encouraging invitation letters via its embassies and consulates to encourage all Afghan medical professionals living abroad to participate in this process. This will facilitate and enhance our efforts to promote and recruit medical professionals.

The organization of hospital/hospitals will gather medical experts from inside and outside of the country, train top medical specialists, and act as a platform to further train some of the existing specialists. Having an organized method of implementation will promote the interconnectedness

of Afghans worldwide, which will funnel with them the latest and most upto date medical knowledge and equipment to Afghanistan. This will spur Afghan-led research and development that will feed into the existing system. Many patients who can financially afford medical care abroad often travel to the neighboring countries for medical treatment. Some of these conditions may be easily treatable in Afghanistan. This could be due to either unawareness of the availability of these service inside the country, or problem of access to the location of service. This along with other conditions, which our country is unable to manage yet, result in the loss of millions of dollars of our finances each year; hence hurting our national economy. This short document is meant to gage the response of the government of Afghanistan in regard to their priorities and political will. The actual implementation of the program will require further multilateral discussion and thorough planning and strategy. We know that many areas need to be addressed as long-term goals, a coordinated team of Afghan sources and DFA can further discuss the areas of needs and priorities.

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