

## Professor Fereydoun Ala

### *Dear Editor;*

In the past few years, it has been the policy of this journal to include with pride, a section on the history of Iranian medicine, to remember and salute many physicians, whether Iranian or foreigner, who have helped to establish institutions and methods of medical practice to improve the health and well-being of our fellow citizens, whether in ancient or modern times.

In June issue of AIM (Volume 18, Number 6, 393-400), Dr. Mohammad Hossein Azizi *et al.* wrote an article on the foundation of the Iranian Blood Transfusion Service, including the biography of its founder, Professor Fereydoun Ala, who was the founding director of the Tehran University Hematology Center from 1969 to 1981 and also the founder and national director of the Iranian National Blood Transfusion Services (INBTS) from 1973 to 1981.

Recently, an interview with Professor Ala has been included in the Farsi version of the IBTO site. It is hoped that in the near future this oversight will be remedied and Professor Ala will be recognized as the founder of these services in more prominent sections of the IBTO and credit will be given where it is well overdue.

Following a near 20-year absence, Professor Ala returned to Iran in 1999 and established the Iranian Comprehensive Hemophiliac Care Center, and became its Honorary President, where he has remained active since.

In 2002, the Academy of Medical Sciences of the I.R. of Iran bestowed upon Professor Ala an honorary membership as an appreciation for his past services to Iranian Medicine and in 2008 printed an article in their newsletter mentioning professor Ala's biography and achievements.

It is a regrettable trait in our history, that in Iran, we are wont to disregard, or even worse, to belittle those who have served our country and its people through hard work and diligence and above all with professional love and care. Whether this neglect has been motivated by political or intellectual and professional mendacity and jealousy is a moot point.

This trait can be traced back over millennia, to the Sassanids who attempted to blot out the history of the Arsacids, to the post-Islamic rulers of Iran who attempted to destroy the historical achievements of the Sassanids, to the Qajars who tried to obliterate the Safavids, to the Pahlavi Dynasty's belittling of the Qajars and so on. It is one of those despicable human motivations and characteristics that imagine that by ignoring or by belittlement of the achievements of others, it might help to promote their own grandiosity.

We tend to create heroes of those who share our own faults and shortcomings and yet neglect those whose moral stature and ethical standards might dwarf our own pusillanimity.

And so it is with Professor Ala and a few others like him who have served Iran and Iranians like us, whose name and achievements have been relegated to 'the dustbin of history' in the fear that they may outshine our meager attempts.

I as an Iranian feel proud to remember and salute them.

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