

Reflections

A Doctor's Journey: From Dream to Reality, Triumph to Tribulation**Dr. Asma Kazi***Rashid Latif Medical College, Lahore*

Since childhood, the dream of becoming a doctor has illuminated my path, shaping my ambitions, decisions, and experiences. As I reflect on my journey, I realize that the path was not just illuminated by my childhood dream, but also shaped by the values instilled in me by my family. In my youthful imagination, doctors embodied a force for healing, tirelessly working to alleviate suffering and restore health. They were the societal saviors, and I believed there was no greater calling than alleviating the pain of the afflicted. The fulfillment experienced by a doctor upon successfully treating a patient must be profound, encompassing both a sense of achievement and deep satisfaction in witnessing the positive transformation in the patient's well-being. Growing up, I witnessed firsthand the impact that compassionate care can have on the lives of those in need. My parents, with their unwavering support and encouragement, fueled my passion for medicine, instilling in me a deep sense of responsibility towards alleviating suffering and promoting well-being. Additionally, as the youngest among my siblings and deeply connected to my parents, I envisioned the role of a doctor as a means to better care for my loved ones in their later years.

With this vision ingrained in my mind, I grew increasingly passionate each day, envisioning myself in the iconic white coat, bringing vitality and joy to those in need. Embarking on my journey with fervor and determination, I was prepared to surmount any obstacles in my path. As years passed, I drew closer to realizing my dream, excelling academically and securing admission to my desired medical college. The years spent in medical school were the most fulfilling of my life, a blend of profound joy and formidable challenges, as I navigated through stages, tests, and professional exams, cultivating a solid foundation for my future career.

Finally achieving my dream felt surreal—a culmination of years of dedication, hard work, and unwavering resolve. It was a moment imbued with a myriad of emotions—joy, excitement, gratitude, and a hint of disbelief. Each sacrifice and challenge endured along the way



seemed insignificant in comparison to the sense of pride and accomplishment that enveloped me. It was a day marked by celebration, introspection, and a renewed sense of purpose as I embarked on a new chapter of my life, embodying the dream that once seemed so distant.

Commencing my house job in the Department of Medicine, I approached my duties with enthusiasm and a thirst for knowledge, eagerly embracing the opportunity to diagnose, treat, and care for patients. However, I soon realized the inherent limitations faced by doctors. Behind the smiles and laughter, lay moments of tears, sadness, and helplessness. The first blow came during my early days—a patient, seemingly improving, suddenly succumbed to their illness. The shock and devastation were overwhelming, and feelings of failure and guilt consumed me. This initial encounter with death sparked a journey of introspection, prompting a vow to continually enhance my medical expertise and techniques to prevent such circumstances.

Throughout my career in medicine, I've encountered a myriad of challenging cases that tested the limits of our knowledge and abilities. Despite our relentless efforts, there were moments of defeat where we, as doctors, had to confront the harsh reality of our limitations. Whether it was battling terminal illnesses, managing chronic conditions with limited treatment options, or facing the anguish of losing patients, each experience left an indelible mark on my soul.

In those early days, the weight of each loss felt like a heavy burden, triggering waves of frustration and helplessness. I vividly remember the moments of vulnerability, where tears flowed freely as I grappled with the harsh realities of mortality. Yet, amidst the despair, there were also moments of resilience, where I found the strength to carry on, driven by a sense of duty and compassion.

As the years passed, I gradually learned to navigate the complexities of medical practice with greater emotional fortitude. The tears became less frequent, replaced by a steely resolve to confront adversity head-on. I drew inspiration from the countless lives I had touched, finding solace in the knowledge that even in the face of defeat, our efforts had made a difference.

However, amidst the ebb and flow of my professional journey, there was one constant source of solace and joy: my family. Watching my parents age gracefully, I found myself embracing the role of caregiver with renewed purpose. From tending to their minor ailments to offering unwavering support in times of need, I cherished every moment spent by their side.

Little did I know that the tranquility of our familial bonds would soon be shattered by the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like a storm on the horizon, its ominous presence loomed large, casting a shadow of uncertainty over our lives. Despite the initial whispers of alarm, I, like many others, underestimated the severity of the situation, clinging to the hope that it would soon pass.

However, as the weeks turned into months, and the infection spread like wildfire, reality began to set in. Smart lockdowns and stringent measures forced us to retreat into the safety of our homes, shielding ourselves from the invisible threat that lurked outside. Faced with the daunting task of protecting my parents, I made the difficult decision to bring them under my roof, hoping to shield them from harm.

Yet, try as I might, I couldn't keep them confined forever. Life, with all its responsibilities and obligations, beckoned them back to their own home, despite the looming specter of the virus. And so, with a heavy heart, I watched them depart, clinging to the fragile hope that they would remain safe and untouched by the pandemic's wrath.

Then came the dreaded phone call, a harbinger of tragedy that would forever alter the course of our lives. My father's voice trembled with fear as he relayed the news of my mother's sudden decline. Rushing to their home, I found her lying in bed, a pale shadow of her former self. The sight of her struggling to catch her breath sent a chill down my spine, as I grappled with the realization that COVID-19 had found its way into our midst.

Summoning every ounce of courage, I administered a pulse oximeter test, only to be met with a distressing reading of 86%. Panic coursed through my veins as I scrambled to take action, ferrying her to the nearest medical facility for evaluation. The X-ray revealed the telltale signs of pneumonia, a cruel reminder of the virus's merciless grip.

From that moment on, time seemed to blur into a haze of fear and uncertainty. Each passing hour brought new challenges, as my mother's condition deteriorated rapidly before my eyes. Despite my best efforts to remain composed, the weight of guilt and despair threatened to consume me, as I grappled with the nagging sense of responsibility for her suffering.

Arranging for oxygen support at home, I watched helplessly as her breathing grew labored, her once vibrant spirit dimming with each passing day. The decision to admit her to the ICU weighed heavily on my heart, as I confronted the harsh reality of her deteriorating health. Standing by her bedside, I felt a profound sense of helplessness wash over me, as I struggled to come to terms with the fact that even my expertise as a doctor could offer little comfort in the face of such overwhelming adversity.

In the days that followed, I found myself thrust into the role of a concerned relative, navigating the unfamiliar terrain of the COVID ICU with trepidation. Every beep of the monitor, every hushed conversation among the medical staff, served as a grim reminder of the fragility of life. Despite my best efforts to remain optimistic, the specter of death loomed large, casting a pall of fear and uncertainty over our lives.

Yet, amidst the darkness, there were moments of light.

The kindness of strangers, the unwavering support of friends and family, served as beacons of hope in our darkest hour. And though the road ahead was fraught with challenges, I drew strength from the love and resilience of my mother, vowing to stand by her side until the very end.

As I pen these final words, I am gripped by a profound sense of loss and sorrow. Despite our collective efforts and unwavering determination, we ultimately lost the battle against COVID-19, and my beloved mother was taken from us far too soon. Her passing leaves an irreplaceable void in my

heart, a poignant reminder of the devastating toll this merciless virus has exacted on countless families around the world. Yet, amidst the grief, I find solace in the cherished memories we shared and the love that will forever bind us together. Though she may no longer walk among us, her spirit will continue to guide and inspire me in all that I do. And so, as I bid farewell to my dear mother, I vow to honor her memory by continuing to serve others with compassion, empathy, and unwavering dedication. May her legacy of love and resilience endure for generations to come.