

Walid Al-Khayal

The pioneer of renal transplantation in Iraq

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In this issue (page 10) Ala Sh Ali and his colleagues have included a paper presented by talking about renal transplantation in Iraq; its history, present and future perspective. This article has derived the Editorial Board to present to you the bibliography of an Iraqi Surgeon who was the first to do renal transplantation in Iraq on both governmental and private hospital. His name was linked to renal transplantation in the minds of most people working in medical professions and minds of public in Iraq as well, Walid Shawkat Al-Khayal.

Walid Al-Khayal was born in Al-Adhamiya town, northern part of Baghdad, in 1931. He is a son of Shawkat Al-Khayal, an Iraqi cavalryman who had a military career in Iraqi Army after the establishment of the Kingdom of Iraq in 1921. Hence the title Al-Khayal has been used to mark the name of Walid Shawkat (Al-Khayal is the Arabic equivalent to cavalryman).

As a son of an officer, he travelled in so many towns and cities of Iraq and there, he had his primary and secondary education. He joined the Royal College of Medicine of Iraq in 1949, and was graduated in 1955; he was the first student among his colleagues. He joined the military service and appointed as a Medical officer at Al-Rasheed Military Hospital which was the base hospital of Iraqi Army.



Figure 1: Dr Walid Shawket Al-Khayal

Positions he had held:

He worked at Al-Rasheed Military Hospital and the Royal Hospital in Baghdad as a junior house officer and senior house officer in general surgery. He was trained by most of prominent Iraqi surgeons and physicians of that time.

He was appointed as a medical accompany to the King Faisal II during 1957-1958. This post has given him the opportunity to travel with the King in most of his visits inside Iraq in 1957-1958. During these visits he, many times, had offered the King the medical care for the attacks of asthma that the King was suffering from.

After returning from the UK and having the fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeon in 1959, he was appointed as a specialist surgeon at Al-Rasheed Military Hospital initially as assis-

tant to Dr Rashad Abdul-Wahid and then as a senior surgeon.

In 1964 he was appointed as the head of surgical department at Al-Rasheed Military Hospital. Then he became the Director of the hospital itself. In July 1973, he granted the title of General in Iraqi Army as an acknowledgment to his pivotal role in establishing renal transplantation in Iraq. Then in September 1974, he was appointed as the Director of the Directorate of Medical Affairs at Ministry of Defence. He continued in this post till February 1976 when he was retired, putting an end to his governmental career and opening, at the same time, the doors for promoting his private work.

During his career as a medical officer and ambitious surgeon, he offered medical and sur-

gical care to the patients. He contributed, with many others, to the raise of the medical military services in 1960s and 1970s. He was well known not only in the field of renal transplantation and urosurgery, but he had practiced in many other surgical fields like GIT, chest, vascular, orthopaedic and even neurosurgery. Also he had actively participated in organizing the Medical Arab Congress in Baghdad in February 1962.

His training outside Iraq:

In 1958, he travelled to the UK to have the fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons. Initially he joined the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital/ Margate; which was founded in 1791 and claimed to be the oldest orthopaedic hospital in the world.* This training had paved the road for him to have the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeon, England in March 1959. After that, he joined The Royal Marsden Hospital, founded in 1851 as the first hospital in the world dedicated to the study and treatment of cancer. There he trained under the hands of the famous British GIT surgeon Norman Cecil Tanner. In August 1959 he joined Stoke City General Hospital, which is now the Royal Stoke University Hospital. He trained with G Crewe, R E Norish, M Sewel and J Newton.

In 1964, he had been delegated to the USA. There he trained at Leterman's Army Hospital in San Francisco, a hospital which was founded in 1898. There he had the chance to work with Professor William R Smart; the famous Urosurgeon of California school of Medicine. Then he had unprecedented opportunity to receive training at Walter Reed Hospital, now called Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda Maryland. This hospital is the main Hospital of the USA Army, and it is the hospital where American presidents receive medical care. He was a member of the surgical team who treated President Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961).

In September 1969 he travelled to the UK worked at Hammersmith Hospital with Geoffrey Duncan Chisholm** a urologist and urosurgeon who became the president of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in 1988-91 and there

* ASakula. Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine.1991; 84:636.

** PATRICK S BOULTER. Obituary of Geoffrey Duncan Chisholm. BMJ 1994;309:1509

he had participated in the first renal transplantation in his life, the trigger for starting renal transplantation in Iraq. Also he had the opportunity to train on renal transplantation on cadaver in France at de Valdigras Hospital. The schedule of training on renal transplantation that Dr Walid Al-Khayal had from France, UK and USA had built the experience and skills necessary to break through in the field of renal transplantation in Iraq. It is worth mentioned here that achievement cannot be made by hopes and wishes but by strategic planning, ard work, and effective training in the best medical centres in the world.

The first renal transplantation in Iraq:

After the experience Dr Al-Khayal had gained in renal transplantation, in addition to provision of some logistics like availability of dialysis machines. He has decided to do renal transplantation in Iraq for the first time under the official support. In June 1973 and in the operating theatre of Al-Rasheed Military Hospital, the history of renal transplantation was written by the hands and wills of a team of surgeons and physicians headed by Dr Walid Al-Khayal. The team had transplanted a kidney from a 54 years living mother to her 30 year-old son who suffered from end stage renal failure. The surgery was successful and the patient lived for 6 years after that. The team included Dr. Walid Al-Khayal, Dr. Salim Khatab Omar, and Dr. Essam Maki Khamas. The attending nephrologist was Dr. Ihssan Al-Shamaa. The anesthetists were Jamal Haboosh, Amir Al-Khayat. The nurses were MalihaFadhil and Kamila. This achievement was gained an official and public appraisal and reported by many local newspapers and was presented at the European Renal Association Conference in Vienna Austria July 1973.

This success drove him to continue renal transplantation at Al-Rasheed Military Hospital and later on in his private Hospital after retirement. So far thousands of patients Iraqis and non- Iraqis have.

Dr Al-Khayal is fond of being a player on stage of theatres. In his early life, he played the characters of many plays: Othello of Shakespeare and the Father of August Strindberg. Then he appeared in the political theatre but not as a first star but as a physician who provided his patients, whatever their position and



Figure 2: The team who performed the first renal transplantation in Iraq in 1973, in the middle Walid Al-Khayal, **to his right** Salim Khatab Omar, then Essam Maki Khamas, and then anaesthetist Jamal Haboosh. **To his left** Kamal Husain then anaesthetist Amer Al-Khayat.
Courtesy of Dr Omar Salim Khatab Omar

rank were, the medical help they deserve. So he worked as a physician for all Iraqi rulers starting from Faisal II. But the imminent role he played in his life was done on the operating theatre by orchestrating the medical and surgical team in their quest to do renal transplantation in Iraq for the first time, the role which has widely opened the doors not only for supporters and admirers to appraise him but for competitors to target him with the arrows of criticism, and even accusation. We may have so many difference views and opinions about these criticism and accusation, but for sure we have agreed without any hesitation that Walid Al-Khayal is the knight of renal transplantation in Iraq and its founding father.

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2. Personal interview for the author with Dr Walid Al-Khayal at his clinic on 12th November 2015.
3. Majeed Al-Samarraee. Attraf Al-Hadeeth. [Podcast on the internet]. Baghdad: Al-Sharqiya TV; 2012 [Published on Dec 17, 2012; cited on November 20, 2015]. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_AfRafU7Rw

Note to the readers: The Editorial Board invites all who are interested in recording our history of medicine in Iraq to send their documented notes and comments and we will be delighted to publish them in our journal.