

# A Tribute to Professor Musallam ElBualy: A Pioneer in Child Health Services

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Losing a hero in the early hours of June 25th 1997 filled our heart with sorrow, but also with a great sense of pride for having known and worked with this extraordinary man who transformed health care for children in the Sultanate.

It has not been an easy task for Child Health Services to reach where it is now for this program hardly existed before the 80's. Much of what has been achieved, we owe to Prof. Musallam ElBualy.

A U.K. medical graduate from Durham University, Prof. ElBualy moved to the USA where he undertook his postgraduate qualifications in Paediatrics. Being an Omani with a deep sense of moral obligation, Prof. ElBualy soon joined the Ministry of Health (MOH) in 1981 where, as Chief of Child Health services, he committed himself to the improvement of Maternal and Child Health Care in the country. In 1986, he was appointed as the first Omani Professor of Paediatrics at Sultan Qaboos University and was involved in the setting up of the curriculum. In 1989 in addition to his teaching responsibilities, he was appointed Director of Curative Services at MOH. His brilliant ideas and missionary zeal contributed to a number of developments, including the rapid decline in Infant Mortality, expansion of the immunisation program, and anti-smoking drives. Thanks in great part to his dedication and hard work, Oman achieved significant advances in all the three areas. His strong views on breast feeding policies led to the success of the "Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative" throughout the country.

Besides his participation in a number of national Committees, he was also a Coordinator in many research activities, including Growth Studies in Omani Children, work in Nutritional Status, and a Gulf Health Survey. He was involved in the National Survey on Iodine Deficiency Disorder, a study on Vitamin A Deficiencies, and the National Survey on Genetic and Hereditary Blood Disorders. He established links in training programs with the Institute of Child Health, London, U.K. He was closely associated with the Royal College of Physicians, U.K. and as a result, Oman became a Centre for Diploma in Child Health (DCH) and later MRCP Examinations. He was nominated as a member and an examiner for the Arab Board. He had an excellent working relationship with WHO and UNICEF and received the WHO Award for Anti-smoking Campaign. His achievements were hailed throughout the Gulf Countries, and he was conferred with the AGCC Medal of honor award in Medicine for his contribution and a Merit Award of the MOH by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta awarded him for his excellent contribution to research related to the control of communicable diseases.

Prof. ElBualy's illness never interfered with his academic enthusiasm and clinical dedication. He was a good friend to others and a fatherly figure, inspiring great affection from his junior staff. His high expectations and straight forward, "no nonsense" attitude kept one in fear of not coming up to his standards. Many a time he would rumble when you dared make mistakes. We still hear those roars echoing across the corridors - something to keep us going, something to remember him by. This was a talented man with excellent leadership qualities and a wealth of knowledge and rich experience.

In January 1996, he was diagnosed as having a Glioblastoma, a problem which he typically kept from his friends and family with braveness and calmness. His happy spirit always made his physical problems seem distant, to the extent that few realised his illness had returned and progressed after treatment with surgery and radiotherapy. He died in his beloved home at the age of 58.

This remarkable man will be missed by all.