

Obituary

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing away of our respected scientist Professor Taha A.S. Baasher on 16 June 2008 at the age of 86.

Dr Baasher graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, Khartoum University (previously Kitchener School of Medicine) in 1949. He was the highest in order among his colleagues, and was appointed to serve in hospitals in Khartoum, Om Dorman, Masawi and Malakal.

He went on to specialize in Medical Psychology at the Institute of Psychiatry, University of London, in 1956. He was among the few scientists who combined psychology with psychiatry, which enabled him to work with several pioneer psychologists in Sudan.

From 1957 to 1969, he served as senior consultant of psychiatry with the Sudanese Ministry of Health. At the same time he was involved in significant national syndicate and political activities.

Dr Baasher was appointed Minister of Labour and then Minister of Health in the Sudanese Government in May 1969. In 1970 he was selected as a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Great Britain. He was keen to organize conferences on psychiatry in Sudan and to attend such meetings held abroad. He endeavoured to apply the policy of integrating mental patients in their communities and achieved great success towards that end.

In 1972, Dr Baasher was appointed Regional Adviser for Mental Health at the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, and in 1983 he took the post of Director, Health Services at the Regional Office. In these two positions he played an important role in promoting the management of addiction and the development of mental health services and programmes in the Region.

When he returned to Sudan in 1984, he was appointed Professor of Mental Health at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum, where he improved the psychiatry curriculum. He was entrusted in the early nineties with the establishment of the University of the Orient, which he presided over until 2006. From the early nineties until the end of his fruitful life, he was actively involved in the work of the Centre for Research on Addiction in Khartoum and chaired one of its scientific departments.

Dr Baasher was a convinced advocate that Islamic culture is rich with appropriate principles and directives that ensure promotion of mental health and a decent life for those who follow them.

During his remarkable scientific and political career, he was awarded decorations from Egypt, Sudan, Jordan and Pakistan in recognition of his efforts and achievements. The Council of Arab Ministries of Health recognized him in 1988 as a model of an exemplary Arabic physician.

Dr Baasher was one of the eminent scientists who supported the *Eastern Mediterranean health journal* as an author and reviewer and he remained a valued supporter until his death.

May God bless the soul of our late colleague. He left us a rich legacy of science and experience in psychiatry that will illuminate the way ahead to those colleagues, students and patients who will follow his path.

Dr H. A. Gezairy
Regional Director for the
Eastern Mediterranean

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