

## The İhsan Dođramacı Children's Hospital Stimulus for A Turkish Miracle

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The late Prof. Dr. İhsan DOĐRAMACI, honorary fellow of the Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS), passed away on February 25, 2010. To celebrate his memory, it is fitting to recall how this extraordinarily creative physician's establishment of a children's hospital in 1957 led to rapid changes in Turkey's traditional medical approaches.

Dr. Dođramacı was appointed associate professor of pediatrics at the Ankara University Medical School in 1949, but the clinical director of the department did not allow him to apply the developments of modern pediatrics that he had observed during fellowships at the Boston Children's Hospital and at Washington University in St. Louis. As a result, in 1954, he convinced the Senate of Ankara University to establish another pediatric department under his leadership. The Senate even offered him half of the pediatric premises. Dr. Dođramacı, however, rejected the offer of sharing quarters, preferring to use a two-room house in a slum area of Ankara as his child health clinic (Figure 1). In the meantime, he began construction of a new Children's Hospital. The construction went ahead unbelievably fast for those times, and the first patient, a premature baby with jaundice, was admitted on July 7, 1957. The hospital officially opened its doors to the public two months later as Hacettepe Children's Hospital (Figure 2). He did not want to give it his name, but many years later the name was changed despite his repeated objections.

During the construction period he prepared his first residents by sending pediatricians to the pathology, internal medicine and surgery departments of Ankara Medical School. They were then enrolled at Georgetown University for English instruction and trained at child health centers in the USA with professors of pediatrics who would later serve on the staff of the hospital in Ankara. Those residents performed the first exchange transfusion in an operating theater of the Ankara University Maternity Hospital.

In the new children's hospital in Turkey, patient care was like that in American University hospitals, as was the program for residents. They were employed full-time and were on call every other day; off-duty residents were available in emergencies since most of them were staying in the hospital. First-year residents were responsible for patients assigned to them, and second-year residents were responsible for a floor. The chief resident was responsible for both in- and out-patients. Admissions and discharges were the responsibility of the residents.

All of them received a salary, and they wore gowns provided by the hospital so as to be known to patients and their relatives. All were assigned laboratory duty, especially at night. The first complete blood counts and urine examinations were carried out by the residents, who were trained to determine electrolytes and bilirubin, and to perform subdural and lumbar function examinations. A blood bank was opened in a hospital for the first time in Turkey, and every



FIGURE 1: Ankara University Medical Faculty Child Health Clinic and Institute.

cross-match was repeated by the residents before starting blood transfusions. Fluid and electrolyte determination and treatments were also initiated here. Running water was available in every patient room, another first in Turkish hospitals. Clinical pathology meetings and regular journal clubs were started in the hospital. Two pediatric journals (in English and Turkish) were regularly published and continue today. Follow-up visits to patients' homes after discharge were carried out by residents in addition to their hospital work. They also served the district where the hospital is located by examining children at home and recording their home facilities, to help improve their health status. This social work was expanded to Bismil (an eastern Anatolian town more than 500 kilometers from Ankara) where the first Turkish toxic porphyria cases had been detected. Regular tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis and tuberculosis immunization campaigns were carried out to reach the area's children.

Hand washing was of prime importance in this hospital where the X-ray department opened at 7 a.m. Permission for autopsy was obtained from almost all exitus cases. Medical students at this hospital started their training caring for a newborn or a pregnant woman assigned to them. They, like the residents, followed them in the clinic as well as in their homes, recording their living conditions. In a short period of time the education system of this hospital attracted attention in European countries and some students were regularly sent to Hacettepe from England for their pediatric training. Consultants were made responsible for the teaching of residents and students. In a

completely new approach for Turkey, the consultants were not allowed to admit or discharge patients; they were restricted to teaching. Laboratory and library facilities were made available 24 hours a day to all the physicians, who were proud of being of a part of this hospital. This feeling of "ownership" resulted in extraordinary teamwork. All residents, while competing with each other, also helped one another, for the success of the hospital. Radio appeals for blood for exchange transfusions were made only by this hospital, which helped make it known to the public in a short time.

Turkish nurses were very scarce at the beginning so nurses were invited from Germany and the Netherlands. Some nurses trained within the hospital also gave excellent service to the patients. In addition, ladies from embassies in Ankara were encouraged to help with patient care, especially for child feeding and social needs. An innovation in Turkish hospitals, nurses reported to the chief nurse rather than to a physician, which gave them the liberty of expressing themselves about patient care as members of the teams making hospital rounds. Medical secretarial and documentation services were introduced in this hospital. Trained dietitians also attended to the patients' needs there, one more first. The concept of hospital administration was also completely revised in order to help and understand the needs of patients and their relatives.

All these changes in practices were realized in a one and a half year period under Dr. Dođramacı's exceptional drive and creativity. His children's hospital became a role model for other



FIGURE 2: Hacettepe Children's Hospital.



FIGURE 3: Hacettepe Children's Hospital organized an international meeting in this building six months after the fire.

Turkish hospitals including university clinics. In addition to their hard work, the department made time for picnics for all the hospital employees, unheard of until then in Turkey. This helped

promote camaraderie among the employees. Its unbelievably big success made this hospital a role model for all Turkish hospitals. Therefore, physicians from the university hospitals chose to work full-time there.

Unfortunately, the hospital caught fire in March 1961, but that tragedy led to its rapid reconstruction. In just six months it opened its doors to the II Congress of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean Pediatric Societies, much larger and better designed to meet its needs (Figure 3). Never one to rest on his laurels, in 1961 Dr. Doğramacı created the Hacettepe Medical School (as a second medical faculty of Ankara University), which was the core of Hacettepe University chartered in 1967.

He also established the first private not-for-profit university in Turkey, known since his death as the İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, in addition to contributing significantly to the creation of three more state universities and to the medical schools at another 10 universities. He re-designed Turkish higher education and was able to have his vision made a reality by a new Universities Law in 1981.

We are indebted to him for his creativity, tolerance, courage and good will and in particular for his work for children and youth in Turkey and abroad. The İhsan Doğramacı Children's Hospital contributed to the development of a new attitude among health professionals and to the introduction of many paramedical professions in the country and thus stimulated miraculous progress in medicine, medical education and health in Turkey.