

Professor Magdy Raymond Francis

1947-2011



An extraordinary mix of soreness and nostalgia is my feeling as I write an obituary on Magdy Francis. For almost half a century, Magdy has been part of my life as a brilliant student, outstanding colleague, enlightened consultant, and a sincere friend, until his premature death at age 64.

Magdy was Egyptian to the marrow, regardless of being half-French. His father, Dr. Raymond Francis was a distinguished professor of literature at Cairo University. The Father's influence, coupled with the Mother's French background, has imposed on Magdy a unique broad-based cultural diversity. He was fluent in many languages, acquainted with many old and modern cultures, including Egyptian ancient history and contemporary politics. He had a sophisticated taste to painting, photography, classic music and poetry. Interestingly, his vibrant wife, Mona, and his son, Alexandre, shared the same common interests, constituting together a lovely model small family.

He was born on 11th September 1947, in Cairo, schooled in the Jesuit College de la Sainte Famille and qualified in Kasr El-Aini Medical School. It was during his clinical years that I got to know him as an extremely popular student, outstanding scholar, and active social leader. He would impress anybody by the breadth of his knowledge, openness and sense of humor. He retained and amplified these qualities throughout his glamorous career.

He graduated in 1970 and soon became a nephrology registrar, under the mentorship of the great professor of his time, Ali El-Badry, until 1974. Being a lecturer in the same unit, I was privileged to know Magdy more closely, and to enjoy his unique qualities and friendship.

Although he was offered a fellowship in the same unit, he decided to become a pathologist. He could foresee the emerging potential of this specialty, and his role as a future leader in the field. He received enormous support from the contemporary experts in the pathology department, particularly Professor Makram Milad. He polished his knowledge and experience in top class nephropathology centers worldwide, including France, England, Scotland and the United States. Magdy's background in clinical nephrology helped him to understand complex diagnostic puzzles and to share in solving them by precise findings and enlightened opinion. He introduced new techniques in sample preparation and staining, and was instrumental in starting and optimizing immunofluorescence techniques. His help and support were critical in setting up the first electron microscope in Cairo University and using it for the diagnosis of kidney disease.

Magdy escalated in his academic career, and became full professor of pathology in 1985. He soon became the prime nephropathologist in the country, and collaborated with hundreds of clinical nephrologists regardless of their location. His support extended even beyond the borders. He helped in setting up, priming and training personnel in many emerging African and the Middle Eastern units. He was an outstanding speaker and teacher in almost every national or regional renal meeting. He was soon picked up by the International Society of Nephrology, and became an important pillar in the pathology committee. He shared in strategy planning, setting standards and developing guidelines, in addition to teaching and training at a global level. He published a lot, in top class medical journals, and wrote several key chapters in leading textbooks of nephrology and pathology.

Magdy was an active member of many social circles. He was a prominent Rotarian, hence his involvement in a lot of community support programs. He had friends in all corners of the world and was a member of numerous social clubs in Egypt and abroad. He was extremely interactive in many Facebook groups, where he had 1129 friends!

His friends gathered around him twice last September. They celebrated his birthday on the 11th September, and paid him farewell in his sad funeral on the 25th. He had spent a happy morning on Friday the 23rd playing with his grandson Alain, had his light lunch and went to bed for his usual weekend siesta. When he was late getting up, his wife Mona went to awake him Magdy had passed away in dignity and serenity.

The news of his death spread very fast. Hundreds of his colleagues and friends all over the world expressed their grief in many ways. Those who could not make it to the funeral called, faxed, published or e-mailed. The Egyptian, African and Arab societies of nephrology will soon announce their ways of memorizing Late Professor Francis. The Global Kidney Academy announced an



annual prize in his name. The president of the international Renal Pathology Society published a tribute to Magdy's memory, and more to come.

How sad it is to lose Magdy Francis; how difficult to overcome the soreness of missing his lovely smile, his lively presence and his seminal experience. Good bye my friend.

Rashad Barsoum