
History of Contemporary Medicine

In Commemoration of Haj Mohammad Nemazee (1895 – 1972): The Founder of Nemazee Hospital in Shiraz

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A portrait of Haj Mohammad Nemazee[§] (1895 – 1972).

"Only a life lived for others, is a life worthwhile".
Albert Einstein

Abstract

Nemazee Hospital in Shiraz, Fars Province, in southern Iran is a well-equipped modern hospital, which was founded in 1955. It is one of the greatest memorials of a Shirazi beneficent merchant, the late Haj Mohammad Nemazee (1895 – 1972), who dedicated much of his wealth to charitable affairs in his birthplace.

This paper briefly explores the history of the establishment of Nemazee Hospital in Shiraz.

Keywords: Iran • hospitals • history of medicine

Introduction

The foundation of charitable institutions including construction of hospitals and other medical centers by rich and generous men and women in Iran known as Vaghf (a bequest or pious foundation) has a long history.

After the introduction of modern medicine into

Iran in the mid 19th century, several modern hospitals were built by wealthy individuals including the former Vaziri Hospital as well as Najmieh, Firoozgar, Firouz Abadi, and Goharshad Hospitals in Tehran, Nourieh Hospital in Kerman, Heshmattieh Hospital in Sabzevar, Nemazee, and Khalili Hospitals, and Poostchi Clinic in Shiraz.

Haj Mohammad Nemazee (Figure 1) was born in Shiraz in 1895 in a distinguished family.¹ His father, Mr. Mohammad Hassan Nemazee was a beneficent man who founded a medical center in Shiraz known as Behboudestan-e Nemazee in 1924.

Haj Mohammad Nemazee had spent much of his life abroad in China, India, Hong Kong, and USA. He was a successful and a rich merchant who loved his birthplace and returned to Shiraz at the end of the World War II and devoted much of his wealth to charitable affairs,² including the establishment of waterworks system in 1952.³ Mr. Nemazee described his intention for constructing a hospital in Shiraz as follows: "Although, according to the Islamic law, an individual's wealth is his personal property, yet it must be considered as a

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[§]The word Nemazee is also used as Namazi.



Figure 1. Mr. Mohammad Nemazee.

fund entrusted to him to use for the betterment of his fellow men, and thus, a few years ago, I decided to spend a large portion of my fortune for charitable benefaction, as did those before me, and so to pay my debt to future generations."²

Mr. Nemazee who served his country Iran, with devotion, love, and honesty eventually passed away of a brain tumor in 1972 and according to his will he was buried in Nemazee's hospital.²

The foundation of Nemazee Hospital

Fars Province is located in south of Iran with an area of 133,000 square kilometers. Shiraz, the center of the Fars Province is one of the most ancient cities of Iran.⁴ Between 1925 and 1941, the public health and medical affairs were managed by an organization known as Sehhyeh-e Koll-e Mamlekati (Public Health Administration), supervised by the Minister of the Interior (Vezerat Omuor-e Dakheleh).⁵ The Public Health Administration of Fars Province (Edareh-ye Sehhyeh-ye Fars) was established in 1937.⁶

Prior to the foundation of Nemazee Hospital the following medical centers were established in Shiraz:

- **Behboudestan-e Nemazee:** It was founded in 1924 by Mr. Mohammad Hassan Nemazee, the father of Haj Mohammad Nemazee.⁷ Behboudestan-e Nemazee continued its activity up to 1936 and eventually changed to an outpatient clinic supervised by Shiraz Municipality (Clinic No. 1 or Darmangah-e Shomareh-ye Yek, Figure 2).⁶
- **Morsalin Hospital (the British Christian Missionary Hospital):** The British Christian



Figure 2. Behboudestan-e Nemazee founded in 1924.

Missionary established a hospital in Shiraz in 1925 known as Morsalin and at the beginning of its foundation, the father of Haj Mohammad Nemazee financially supported it.⁶ According to Dr. Zabih Ghorban (1903 – 2006), the first Dean of Shiraz Medical School, this hospital was headed by the English physician Dr. A. Vaughn. In 1932, the hospital had 20 beds, and a small operating theater. Then, the new building of the hospital was inaugurated in 1935 with 50 beds.⁸

- **Saadi Hospital** (recently Shaheed Faghihi Hospital) was established in 1941. In 1946, this hospital had five departments as follows: internal medicine, surgery, ophthalmology, obstetrics and gynecology, and pediatrics.⁶ At that time it was regarded as the most instrumental medical institute serving the whole of Fars Province.^{8,9}

Mr. Mohammad Nemazee returned to Shiraz in 1944.² According to Dr. Khosrow Nasr the former Dean of Shiraz Medical School, Haj Mohammad Nemazee initially wanted to buy and establish a 25-bed World War II prefabricated hospital in Shiraz. He was at that time living in the United



Figure 3. Dr. Torab Mehra, the first director of Nemazee Hospital.



Figure 4. Dr. Allen O. Whipple (third from right) and Mr. Mohammad Nemazee (forth from right). Dr. Horace T. Gardner is also seen (first from the right side). The interns are sitting in the front row, 1956.

States. He contacted Dr. Torab Mehra (Figure 3), a US-trained Iranian who had a strong commitment to the care of the poor and the underserved populations. With Mehra's input, the Nemazee project grew into a 250-bed hospital.¹⁰ Thus, Mr. Nemazee established a foundation in America in 1948, known as "Iran Foundation" to carry out his hospital project in Shiraz. The Iran Foundation was supervised by a board consisted of 17 outstanding Iranian and American physicians and the members of the advisory board of this foundation were 19 well-known physicians and surgeons. The Vice-Chancellor of Iran Foundation was Dr. Leyland Robinson, the famous physician of New York University and Dr. Mehra was appointed as the director of medical affairs. An American construction company named Whiting designed a 250-bed hospital and in 1950 the construction of the hospital and residential villas for the physicians were started. In 1952 a part of the hospital supervised by two American physicians, Dr. Robert Hiatt (surgeon) and Dr. Horace T. Gardner (internist) started its activity (Figure 4).

In 1954, the hospital was supported by the income generated from Shiraz waterworks which was founded by Nemazee in 1952. Then, in June 1955, Nemazee Hospital was officially inaugurated (Figure 5) and it soon became the most famous referral medical center in southern Iran and the Middle East. About 20% to 25% of the patients were from Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar as well as Africa.² At that time, the first surgical operation (a case of herniorrhaphy) was performed by Dr. Allen O. Whipple (1881 – 1963), the renowned American surgeon who described the surgical procedure of pancreatoduodenectomy in 1930's (known as Whipple's operation) (Figure 4).¹¹

By 1959, most of the physicians and personnel working at the hospital were Iranians. Among the first group of the physicians who joined the Nemazee Hospital were Dr. Mohsen Ziaee (pediatrician), Dr. Ataolla Lotfi (anesthesiologist), Dr. Jalil Farah (radiologist), Dr. Rashid Masomi (cardiologist), Dr. Rahim Dehkan (general



Figure 5. Left) An old view of Nemazee Hospital. Right) A current view.

surgeon), Dr. Khalil Alavi (otolaryngologist), and Dr. Ahmad Riazi (ophthalmologist). Shiraz University was established later in 1955.⁸ According to Dr. Nasr, "the Nemazee Hospital was supported by the income generated from Shiraz waterworks system; however, it was unable to support itself financially and therefore depended on the subsidy from the government. The government's continued financial support was conditional on the Nemazee Hospital becoming integrated with the University".¹⁰

Between 1969 and 1971, the hospital improved to a 500-bed one and new wards were established and supervised by the Shiraz University.²

At present, Nemazee Hospital is a major teaching and research medical center in Iran, affiliated to Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. It has 962 personnel and 750 beds for patients' admission, 35 wards, several clinics, emergency room, and well-equipped paraclinical units.¹² Its solid organ transplantation center is a well-known center and it is the main liver and pancreas transplantation center in Iran.

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