

## HISTORY

## EMINENT ANESTHETISTS OF PAKISTAN

## Professor Rustam Ali Nabi - a pioneer in anesthesiology

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*'Apicare Journal' has started this very ambitious program to preserve the history of the eminent anesthetists of Pakistan, starting with the heroes who laid the foundations of this budding specialty in the early days after the independence, against all odds. Earlier, we published stories of Prof. S.U. Kaul, Prof. Mehdi Hasan Mumtaz and Maj Gen (Retd) Muhammad Anis ur Rehman Khan. This is the continuation of the project. Readers are requested to contribute to this project and join us in achieving our targets. (Editor-in-Chief)*

Professor Rustam Ali Nabi was born on 29th September 1916 in a small town Rahon, District Jalandhar, now in East Punjab, India. After primary education at Rahon, he accompanied his father Mr. Ghulam Nabi to England in 1928 at the tender age of 12 years. He joined the Raines Foundation School, Arbour Square, London; from where he passed his matriculation examination in 1934 and the intermediate examination in 1936.

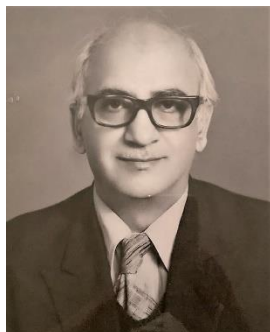


Figure 1: Prof. Rustam A. Nabi

Being a brilliant student, he was selected for medical schooling at St. Bartholomew's in London and he qualified his MBBS final year examination in 1941. After house job for one year at Barking Emergency Hospital, he was conscripted into the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1942. There, he volunteered for the Indian Medical Service and was sent



Figure 2: Prof. Rustam during early career

to Poona for training in anesthesiology. He served in Burma, Malaya and Java as an anesthetist, till December 1947. Meanwhile, by the untiring efforts of Muslims led by Quid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, A new homeland named Pakistan had been created. He was ordered not to join The Victoria Jubilee (V.J.) Hospital, Amritsar

as anesthetist, but to proceed straight to King Edward Medical College (KEMC) Lahore to join as assistant anesthetist. He joined KEMC Lahore in February 1948 and proceeded to England in September 1948 for postgraduate training in anesthesiology.

Dr Rustam was happily married to Shamim Ara Begum, who accompanied him to England when he proceeded for postgraduation.



Figure 3: Early family life

He qualified the Diploma in Anesthesia (DA). It was the highest qualification in anesthesia at that time in 1950.



Figure 4: Rustam A. Nabi at the battlefield

He returned to join KEMC as assistant professor and Mayo Hospital Lahore as the Chief Anesthetist in 1953. He taught at both KEMC and Fatima Jinnah Medical College (FJMC) Lahore, and trained many postgraduates in the latest techniques of anesthesia at that time.



**Figure 5: As a young captain**

The first professional chair in anesthesia was created at KEMC Lahore in 1959 and Prof. Rustam Ali Nabi became the first professor of anesthesia in Pakistan. In 1962, Royal College of Surgeons - England, conferred upon him the coveted honor of FFARCS.

He conducted the first DA examination for the University of Punjab in 1962. He was also an examiner for the MCPS and FCPS for the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan. In 1974, at the age of 58 years he retired from the government service, as it was the age of retirement then. He was offered an extension for three years and the role of principal of Nishtar Medical College, Multan, both of which he refused gracefully.

Throughout his career he was sought out not only for professional advice and expertise but also for guidance in planning careers, personal lives and dealing with, in fact, anything that presented a problem to anyone. Therefore, he was known as 'Guru Ji' – the know-all person. He was really a soft spoken, doe-eyed sage who was available to all, and at all times. Many remember him as the kind, gentle doctor who drove away all fears; the troubleshooting anesthetist who would sit up all night, smoking and pondering over the solution to a patient's problem, or as the learned colleague with a twinkle in his eyes and a great sense of humor. He was at peace with himself in this very world and the contentment he had is seldom seen these days.

He helped set up anesthesia units of Fatima Memorial Hospital, Mansab Clinic, Imtiaz Surgical Clinic, Rehmatullah Trust Hospital and many others. Some of our very senior anesthesiologists were mentored by him such as Prof. Attiya Sakhi, Prof. Brig M. Salim, SI(M),

Prof. Mehdi Hassan Mumtaz, Prof. Manzoor Chaudhry, Dr. Munir Ahmad (late) and others. He introduced and



**Figure 6: At 13 Indian Casualty Clearing Station**

taught the intricacies of the spinal analgesia to them. He was also the first to successfully practice treatment of 'trigeminal neuralgia' by injecting alcohol for ablation. He generously imparted to others all that he had learned abroad and always kept himself current with the latest knowledge and trends as long as he lived.

The Pakistan Society of Anesthesiologists founded its Lahore Chapter in 1976; the four founding members being;

1. Prof. Rustam Ali Nabi
2. Prof. Attiya Sakhi
3. Prof. Sajid Usman Kaul
4. Dr. Razia Asghar

Prof. R. A. Nabi was chosen as the first president of the society and Prof. S. U. Kaul as the first secretary. Later on, Prof R. A. Nabi remained the Patron of the society till he passed away!

He passed away on the 28th November, 1993. He is survived by three kids, all of whom became doctors, the elder two followed the footsteps of their father and chose anesthesia as their specialty!

Some of his favorite sayings were:

*"Necessity is the mother of invention and the laziness is the step-mother of invention."*

*"Always listen carefully to your patient, or you may miss out on something important."*

*"Anything worth doing is worth doing well."*

*"Ik motapa, sau siyapa" (Obesity is equivalent to one hundred ailments).*