

Salah Al-Askari, MD., MA Urology, F.A.C.S.
11/16/1929 – 3/12/2020

Dr. Salah Al-Askari, MD, MS, FACS passed away on March 12, 2020 due to complications following a stroke. After graduating with top honors from the Royal College of Medicine in Baghdad, Iraq, he began his surgical training at the Cornell Surgical Division of Bellevue Hospital. He then completed his urologic training at New York University, Bellevue Medical Center in 1957 and joined the faculty in 1958. He was a Professor of Urology and for the next 50 years trained residents without interruption. He dedicated his career to providing medical care to thousands of underprivileged New Yorkers at Bellevue Hospital Center.

Dr. Al-Askari was known for many firsts. In 1971, he became the first Director of Urology at Bellevue and held that post for over 30 years. Known fondly by many as Marcus Welby due to his compassion, he had the undying gratitude of Bellevue patients and their families. He established the Chronic Hemodialysis Unit at Bellevue, co-directed the Renal Transplantation Program, and performed the first successful cadaveric kidney transplant at Bellevue in 1967; this patient still lives with normal renal function, has grandchildren, and is one of the longest living survivors of this procedure. During his tenure, he oversaw the expansion of the training program at Bellevue and the development of the department as a center of excellence, especially in the field of reconstructive surgery and endourology.

Dr. Al-Askari wrote numerous articles and chapters in books on basic sciences in urology and immunobiology. In 2018, the Journal of Immunobiology selected a jointly authored article on his research as one of its seminal 100 articles for the past 100 years. Dr. Al-Askari was a career scientist of the Health Research Council of the City of New York, and focused his research on transplantation antigens, homograft tolerance and transfer of delayed hypersensitivity. His studies led to the discovery of the first lymphokine: the migration inhibitory factor, (MIF). In recognition of this work, the National Institutes of Health appointed him to the Immunobiology Study Section and he subsequently became the first urologist to serve two terms as its chairman. The New York Academy of Medicine honored Dr. Al-Askari for these accomplishments at its 150th anniversary celebration with the Urology Section Award.

A member of NYU School of Medicine's Faculty Council since its formation in 1970, Dr. Al-Askari served as its President from 1994 to 1997. He chaired its Benefit and Tenure Committee for over 15 years and also served as the President of the entire New York University Faculty Council from 1989-1990. In recognition of his dedication to the welfare of the faculty at both the School of Medicine and the University, in 2002 he was appointed as the Director of Faculty Liaison, a position that formalized the role he played for many years as ombudsman for the faculty in the school.

Dr. Al-Askari was a prominent leader in the tristate Islamic communities for several decades. He served on the board of the Islamic Cultural Center of New York and was instrumental in securing the land for the mosque located at 96th Street and 3rd Avenue in the 1970's. Dr. Al-Askari served on the medical board of ANERA and dedicated his life to providing medical services for the underprivileged in other countries.

Dr. Al-Askari was an avid boater and enjoyed international travel and history. He came from an illustrious Iraqi family of politicians and ambassadors and lectured frequently on his native country. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Catherine, his daughters Laila, Yasamin, and Mariam (Diehl), son-in-law Scott, and grandsons Ibrahim and Omar (Jacobs) and Quinlan (Diehl), along with many cousins, nieces and nephews.

A private funeral service was held in Patterson, New Jersey. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be sent to American Near East Refugee Association (ANERA.org) located at 1111 14th Street NW, #400, Washington, DC 20005.