

Karim Vessal, MD

I deeply regret to inform you of the sad demise of Dr. Karim Vessal, the founding Editor of the *Iranian Journal of Medical Sciences (IJMS)*. After a life of relentless activity, he passed away at the age of 89, on February 19, 2022, in his hometown, Shiraz, Iran. By the death of Dr. Vessal, the medical profession has lost one of its wisest members, and a large circle of friends has lost a beloved and trusted adviser.

Karim Vessal was born in 1933 in Shiraz. He studied diagnostic radiology and physics in Germany from 1952 to 1965. Upon his return to Iran, he joined the Department of Radiology, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, and founded the *IJMS* in 1970. He was its Editor for more than two decades. His main impetus for his interest in editorship, as he expressed it, stemmed from his years in Europe when he used to pay attention to authors' names, institutions, and countries of affiliation in the reference lists of book chapters and articles. He found the list contradictory to what he had learned about the history of Iran in his high-school years in terms of the abundance of Iranian scholars and the erudition of Iranian contributions to science. It dawned on him how the flow of science had reversed during the past centuries in the Middle East—the *lux* was no longer *ex oriente*.

To regain the standing we used to have in the world and to drive the rusted wheels of scientific research in Iran, he tried to establish the necessary infrastructures for conducting and publishing biomedical research. Although many people believed that English, the *lingua franca* of science, was a formidable barrier to acceptance by international bodies, he chose to publish the *IJMS* in English to prove that this hurdle was surmountable. He knew well that competing with well-equipped western institutions in mainstream research for a share of global scientific production was an uphill battle. In response, he encouraged researchers to concentrate on studying and publishing their work on diseases prevalent in Iran and the Middle East—for instance, thalassemia, leishmaniasis, and echinococcosis. He believed that the mainstream research conducted in developed countries is often not pursuable in the developing world; that, bearing in mind the research priorities of a country, only those research projects and scholarship programs should be supported or rewarded that bring the most feasible and cost-effective results for their homeland. Indeed, this idea of focusing on the geographic medicine shaped the mission and vision of the *IJMS*, as well as many other journals launched thereafter.

Believing that promoting scientific research and writing was the only way out of the existing situation, Dr. Vessal was actively involved in the establishment of two more biomedical journals—*Archives of Iranian Medicine*, the official publication of the Iranian Academy of Medical Sciences; and *Iranian Journal of Radiology*, the official publication of the Iranian Society of Radiology—both are currently among prestigious journals in the region.



The *IJMS* Editorial Office in 1998

Dr. Vessal contributed enormously to the medical community and biomedical research in Iran in various capacities. He was a life-member of the Iranian Academy of Medical Sciences, a member of the Iranian Radiology Board of Examiners, and the Chair of the Department of Radiology, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, to name just a few of his positions.

He had an amazing talent in linguistics and was fluent and wrote eloquently in four languages. He was interested in a wide array of scientific disciplines, from medicine and neuroscience to astrophysics and cosmology. During the last years of his life, he mostly focused on the history of science and traditional medicine in different parts of the world. He was always enthusiastic about learning new things; alas, *ars longa, vita brevis*.

In recognition of his lifelong endeavors to improve editorship in Iran in particular and in the region at large, and for his substantial contributions to the progression of medical sciences, he was awarded the first rank National Medal of Science in 2011. I believe he can be considered the father of modern scientific editing in Iran.

Dr. Vessal was a conscientious scholar and teacher, and his care in everything he undertook was spectacular. He was always there with his wise, carefully considered counsel. As one of his pupils, I witnessed his efforts to improve a manuscript when he was the Editor of the *IJMS*. He spent hours talking with the authors of the submitted manuscripts and helped them find their own voices to correctly express themselves.

All in all, he was one of the greatest and wisest men the medical profession has so far produced, and had qualities far higher than many of his brethren were aware of. We shall miss him.

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