

Obituary



Dr Amir Hossein Mehregan, who died recently aged 69, was a strong influence on dermatology and dermatopathology as the author of several textbooks and many scientific articles. He was born in 1931 in Tehran. His father, like many young men of his generation, had participated in the political events of the revolution that changed the monarchy to a constitutional Monarchy and established the first elected Iranian Parliament (circa 1903). Mehregan's father had completed a year of medical school when his father died. Being the eldest son he, as tradition dictated, had to sacrifice his further education in order to support the family and enable his younger brothers to complete their studies.

Perhaps because Mehregan's father ambitions had not been fulfilled, he strongly encouraged his son to become a doctor. The young Amir Hossein was one of the 240 successful candidates (among 1000 applicants) who entered Teheran University Medical School in 1948. Six years later he was one of the 225 graduates. His last three years at the medical school coincided with the political upheavals of the nationalization of the British Petroleum Company by the late Dr Mohammed Mossadeq, the Nationalist Prime Minister, whose government was toppled eventually by a coup d'état. During the military rule that followed, life in Teheran was very unpleasant for Dr Mehregan. In 1955 he left for the United States where he completed two-year residency training in dermatology in the Skin and Cancer Hospital of Philadelphia. There he spent his spare time in the afternoons studying the hospital's collection of pathological slides and so began his life-long interest in skin pathology.

After Philadelphia he went to the University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison for a third year residency. Two important incidents happened during this fateful year that influenced his life permanently. First, he met Virginia, a nurse in the female medical ward; secondly, Dr Sture Johnson, chairman of the department, took him to the O' Leary conference in the Mayo Clinic where he met Herman Pinkus and told him about his interest in dermatopathology.

Pinkus offered him the Fellowship in Dermatopathology at the Wayne State University Medical School at Detroit and he joined in the summer of 1958. In the winter of the same year he married Virginia in Madison and took her to Detroit. His Fellowship was extended for a second year, the beginning of 26 years of intimate association with Pinkus, a pioneer well ahead of his time, who read widely and had subscribed to many scientific journals in the fields of anatomy, cytology, cellular biology and cancer research. Some of the most important articles that they published together were on psoriasiform tissue reactions, intra-epidermal

epidermotrophic eccrine carcinoma and artifacts in dermatopathology. Using Acid Orcein Giemsa stain routinely, Mehregan became specially interested in the abnormalities of elastic fibers in various diseases and tumors such as melanocytic nevi and basal cell epithelioma. Pinkus was the first to report on the incorporation of elastic fibers by the proliferating epithelium in Keratoacanthoma, that they had also observed in regenerating epithelium during the repair of ulcers. These observations led to the concept of the very important biological phenomenon of 'Transepithelial Elimination' that he first reported in Elastosis Perforans Serpiginosa, Reactive Perforating Collagenosis, Nodular Calcinosi Cutis and Perforating Granuloma Annulare.

At the same time he taped a series of eight lectures given by Pinkus, each lasting an afternoon. He then typed these lectures in the form of different chapters that formed the backbone of their first edition of a "Guide to Dermatopathology" by Pinkus and Mehregan published in 1969. This book presented a different approach to the study of dermatopathology and became an important reference and bench-book. It classified the inflammatory diseases from the point of view of models of various tissue reactions, rather than discussing different diseases separately. It put skin adnexal tumors in a spectrum classified according to their degree of structural similarities and differences and discussed the differences between Basal Cell Epithelioma and Squamous Cell Carcinoma on the basis of their epitheliostromal interactions. Mehregan continued its publication with new co-authors including his sons, the 6th edition being published in 1995.

The Pinkus Dermatopathology Laboratory at Monroe was started as a hobby that, under Mohegan's leadership, turned into a fully-fledged diagnostic laboratory welcoming local and overseas residents and consultants for study. Every year it accepts a number of fellows for training in dermatopathology.

Dr Mehregan is survived by his wife and four children. David and Dariush, distinguished dermatopathologists in their own rights, joined their father in the Pinkus Laboratory with Soosan, a Wisconsin graduate in accounting, who is the administrative director. Robert, the youngest son, a graduate in Electrical Engineering from Wisconsin University of Technology with an MSc from the Central University of Florida, works for the Medronic Company, the maker of heart pacemakers. It is hoped that his seven grandchildren will continue the tradition set by Dr Mehregan whose legacy remains an outstanding contribution to the science and practice of dermatopathology.

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