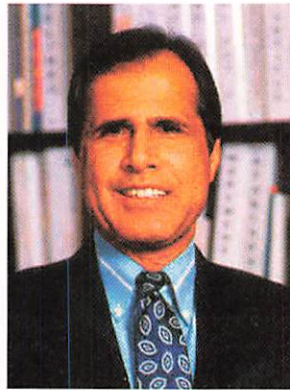


LifeRaft Propels Forward

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A expatriate Pakistani physician having worked hard and made the most of what the developed world has to offer in terms of professional and economic development may one day get a sudden realization. His prosperity may not have been possible had it not been for the generosity of his alma mater back home that trained him in primary medicine at almost no cost compared to most countries. He or she then is set into a thinking of how best of return the favor.



As an individual, one can only partake token acts of benevolence for the sake of the College back home. One can directly approach A.P.P.N.A. but chances that anything can be moved in large associations at the request of one member are remote. APPNA is likened to a large "ocean liner", set in its course. It cannot be expected to lay anchor at the request of one or even a few passengers. One can turn to an Alumni Association to see if they can do something. Though smaller and more independent they are still like "barges" tied to the APPNA mother ship. Is there something smaller and more nimble that an individual can manipulate and achieve results? Our colleagues in Dow Class of 1977 and myself came up in 2001 with the concept of a LIFERAFT, and an inflatable one at that.

Thus was born the LifeRaft Movement. The concept envisions a graduating class forming a pod lead by a few active individuals who agree to undertake a defined project for their alma mater. This could be carried out at some auspicious occasion such as the Silver Jubilee of Graduation when nostalgia may be at its peak and the urge to congregate and celebrate at the Institution may coincide.

A LifeRaft can be lowered to the sea when needed. It is meant to carry a few people at a time. It can propelled

with the help of the "passengers" without help from outside and is subservient in its direction to the appointed leaders in the group. Unlike the ocean liner, it can move sideways and against the current. It can navigate into tributaries and up the streams and on to the rivers and canals. It can even go ashore and be dragged over land. Once its job is done, it can be deflated and re-used by other "passengers".

In other words, the individual physician, day dreaming to do some good to his College in Pakistan has a practical way to do it. He first contacts his own class-fellows who may be scattered through the world, but statistically mostly in Pakistan followed by Middle East, UK and USA. A email group made free on yahoo or topica helps in quick communication. A core group in Pakistan can spearhead the Project. Through some research and negotiations with the office of the Principal and the Administrator of the attached teaching hospital, special needs can be identified, a plan and projected cost can be drawn and collection of funds can start, a bank account in Pakistan serving as a reservoir. Depending on the size of the project, it might take approximately 2 years to complete, hence plan way ahead in time for a Silver Jubilee Reunion, an ideal time in our experience for a sizable and meaningful undertaking.

The Dow Medical Class of 1976 blazed a trail of a LifeRaft-like project with the establishment of a Emergency Operating Room which was completed in 2001 when they celebrated their Silver Jubilee in Karachi. The Class of 1977 followed with their own Labor Room and OB-GYN Emergency Room Project, a \$250,000 undertaking which took 6 months to complete and was inaugurated on December 31, 2002.

The Labor Room Project consists of a state-of-the-art Labor Emergency Room located on the second floor of Civil Hospital next to the old Labor Room. Attached to it are two new Operating Rooms, a Labor and Delivery area and a school of Midwifery that will train 20 students. A New Department of Ob-Gyn Emergency was sanctioned by the Sindh Department of Health. A philanthropist group



Dow Medical College Class of 1977 who participated in the development and inauguration of the Labor Room and Emergency OB-GYN Department Project in December 2002.

has taken responsibility to run the project for the next two years. The Project is currently overseen by the Dow77 Committee consisting of Drs. Hamid Zaki, Mabel Zaki, Shahid Kamal and Shaukat Malik. The Governor of Sindh impressed by the success of the project awarded a Gold Medal to the Class in October 2002.

Next in line, the Dow Class of 1978 has already started preparations to remodel the Operating Rooms. The ground breaking for a Operation Theatre will be performed by the Governor Sindh on June 2, 2003. Other LifeRafts are waiting and ready to be boarded by other classes that graduated in 1978 from atleast 6 medical colleges that existed in Pakistan at that time to start an endeavor of their own. All those schools are aging and need help in updating their departments, opening new departments, libraries, teaching materials, patient welfare areas, or even something as simple as out-of-town family living quarters when children are undergoing treatment for cancers etc. (Something akin to Ronald McDonald House). It is hoped that all classes will get to think of what they would like to do with their LifeRaft when the time comes.

The "ocean liners" and "barges" are important in their own right in this scheme. The LifeRafts when distressed by strong currents or rough winds will need to be thrown a towline to get them out of the turmoil. Experienced "captains" in the large vessels can offer help and guidance (and funds). The Alumni Associations, for example, can

stay in touch with the medical colleges and get find out their needs for growth and maintenance. They can then prepare a menu of projects appropriately prioritized, for the classes to choose from. The Mother ship APPNA can oversee these projects, maintain a registry of their progress and completion, educate and encourage its members though its various media outlets, keep a bird's eye view of the needs of the country's medical education requirements and identify areas of deficiency for the barges and their attached LifeRafts to head for.

It is hoped the the LifeRaft Project will create a tradition of graduating classes completing 25 years of professional growth and prosperity, to remember their mother and send her a gift for the selfless hard work she put in their early development.

It is even hoped by the author that a day will arrive when the above needs of the existing Schools are met and APPNA will then contemplate establishing an "APPNA Medical College" with funds and endowments from its members The School could be located in the under served areas of Pakistan such as the Makran Coast or Skardu or one of the Tribal areas to help them crawl out of centuries of deprivation and neglect.

But then that's just a dream.....a Lasseeville Dream.

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