



APA 2020 DISTINGUISHED FELLOWS

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It is my great honor to become a distinguished fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. I would like to thank Drs. Iraj Siassi, Iraj Maany, Kambiz Pahlavan for acknowledgment of my services to the Iranian psychiatric community and their letters of support. It was through their partnership that I was able to facilitate educational opportunities among the Persian speaking psychiatry community.

I am writing this in the historical era of COVID-19, lock down, a time to sacrifice for the greater good of public health. We self-impose deprivation of the nurturing act of physical touch. We are separated from our dearest, and feel the dismay, which brings home the pains of those being ignored for too long, the families, who due to wars and sociopolitical unrests, are being pulled apart. Refugees are forced out of their homelands and being dehumanized. Parents are burying their children on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Children are being kept in cages apart from their parents at the US-Mexican border. I see the deprivation of the mother in Iran, not allowed to visit her daughter, because of the Moslem Ban, and I feel the home sickness of her student-daughter, not knowing whether she could ever see her mother again.

In our homeland, we are all familiar with the desperate parent who has to find solace in incarceration of his son as an assurance against drug overdose and we feel the loneliness of the addicted patient, suffering the torment of his drug dependency.

As a COVID-19 responder, I witness the despair of a son accepting the gradual death of his parent, who was not allowed on ventilator, due to the ration system and further suffering the consequences of his unexpressed grief. We are to remember: **“We are diverse but related to each other as the five unequal fingers of a hand.”**

I am grateful to my parents who instilled in me the love for humanity and acquiring knowledge. I was taught serving mankind is the highest honor one can experience. As a child, I adopted: Ibn Sina, Thomas Edison and Santiago Ramon Y Cajal as historical mentors. Throughout my career, I benefited from wisdom of my great many teachers; amongst all, when facing the thankless task of caring for hostile patients; I remember the sayings of Dr. Kambiz Pahlavan: *“In medicine the patient comes holding his belly complaining of belly pain, but in psychiatry he yells at you hoping that would tell you about his pain and if it seemed the patient had been caught in a vicious cycle of going nowhere or making so little progress, it is on our profession to bring innovation.”*

Above all, I am indebted to my “hard to treat” patients and their families, who their hopes and demands for improvement propelled me to utilize, the skills I learned from the late Dr. Joseph Schildkraut and Dr. Carl Salzman of Mass. Mental Health Center, as how methodically to think out of the box when the standard of care has been exhausted, but how to keep the balance between the two. Working with my students, I template my 9th grade social studies teacher in Tehran’s Alborz high school who said; *“the lifetime achievement of a teacher is the honor of playing a ladder upon which students climb up.”* Finally, I am also grateful to the MPS staff