



**"Even if currently
you don't see the
wisdom behind
what's happening in
your life, have faith
that it is in your best
interest and keep
moving forward to
leave your
footprint."**

NISREEN AMAYIRI

JORDAN

Dr. Nisreen Amayiri is a paediatric neuro-oncologist at the King Hussein Cancer Center (KHCC) in Jordan.

She completed her Higher Specialization in Paediatrics at the Jordan University of Science and Technology and her fellowship in Paediatric Hematology Oncology at the KHCC. Following her graduation in 2011, she was appointed and continues to be in charge of the neuro-oncology service.

Dr. Amayiri is the recipient of the ASCO 2016 Life Award from the Conquer Cancer Foundation which enabled her to pursue her paediatric Neuro-Oncology fellowship at the Hospital for Sick Children (Sickkids)/Toronto in 2016/2017.

Recently in 2020 and through a My Child Matters grant, an initiative of the Sanofi Espoir Foundation, she is leading a national awareness project, HeadSmart Jordan, raising awareness about the signs and symptoms of brain tumors in children to allow timely diagnosis and referral.

Dr. Amayiri has several publications related to paediatric brain tumors. Her main clinical interest is to work nationally, regionally and internationally to improve the survival and importantly the quality of life of children diagnosed with CNS tumors in resource-limited countries.

She believes that this can be achieved through close collaborations and twinning with institutions and programmes in high income countries.

On Relationships that Influenced My Career

Having a great mentor early in my career had the biggest impact on my professional development. Dr. Eric Bouffet, the lead paediatric neurooncologist at Sickkids and former SIOP President, helped the KHCC to establish the Paediatric Neuro-Oncology service in 2003 through a strong and unique twinning programme between the two institutions.

Through this collaboration, there was a significant improvement in the survival and quality of life of children with brain tumors in Jordan. He offered me invaluable guidance and support, helped raise my confidence and problem-solving abilities, and made it possible to establish an expanded international network of collaborations for clinical care and research.

The second influential relationship in my career was with ASCO. First, I received their International Development and Education Award (IDEA) in 2015, followed by the Long-term International Fellowship (LIFE) in 2016 which enabled me to get hands-on training in Paediatric Neuro-Oncology at Sickkids. This boosted my clinical skills and allowed me to experience clinical trials using innovative approaches, including targeted medications and immunotherapy. Upon my return to the KHCC, I worked tirelessly to make these medications available to my patients through compassionate access programmes. I am in the process of joining international prospective clinical trials for children with CNS tumors at the KHCC for the first time. Recently, in 2022, I joined ASCO Education Scholarship Programme aiming to build a better understanding of the cognitive sciences and adult learning theories to enable me to be more engaged in education and to advance my leadership skills. All these achievements would not have happened without the big support I received from my institution, KHCC.

On Challenges and Overcoming Them

The main challenges I faced at the start of my career were my limited knowledge in Paediatric Neuro-Oncology and lack of leadership skills' training. In the rapidly advancing field of Paediatric Neuro-Oncology, it was challenging for a recently graduated fellow to manage a large number of newly diagnosed (80-100 per year) patients with different tumor types.

In addition, being in charge of running difficult family discussions was very challenging. However, through the support of my colleagues at the KHCC and the wonderful twinning programme, patients received the best care possible. My colleagues at the KHCC and I were able to design safe treatment plans for our patients. Thanks to the twinning programme and our monthly video-teleconferences, we were able to design the most appropriate treatment plans, fine-tuned to our resources.

Through these discussions with our twinning programme partner, and the shared articles and guidance afterwards, we noticed an escalation in the team's knowledge over time. Twinning, if done in the proper way, is a great success formula to advance care in countries with limited resources. Subsequently, several regional countries joined our teleconferences where they are given the opportunity to discuss their patients' management plans and advance their knowledge.

To lead a team when you are the most junior was not easy. Your self-confidence and communication skills are tested every day. Nevertheless, three things helped me improve these skills: understanding myself better, improving my clinical knowledge, and having an experienced mentor who is ready to listen and provide advice. These challenges made me a better version of myself, more knowledgeable and wiser, and ready to take the lead and mentor younger colleagues.

On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

This has never been easy; working as a paediatric neuro-oncologist in a resource limited country is demanding, both physically and emotionally. Few things helped me find some work-life balance. My mother's support and encouragement kept me focused on the worth of my work and the important people in my personal life. Working on some research projects allowed me to distract from the stress of the clinical duties even if for a short time. Spiritual meditation helped me organize my life priorities and "re-charged" me whenever I felt overwhelmed.

My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders

Have a passion for your work; this is what will help you survive the tough times. Utilize every chance to expand your professional network; this is an invaluable resource for future opportunities. Find a mentor who is able to understand your values and career goals and who is enthusiastic and invested in your growth and support. And most of all, maintain a work-life balance!