

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

A journey from being preterm to pediatric neurology

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the story of two pediatric neurology residents (identical twin sisters Rana and Rawan) who work at the Division of Pediatric Neurology, Department of Pediatrics, College of Medicine and King Khalid University Hospital (KKUH), King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. They were born in October 1990 in the same hospital (KKUH), following preterm delivery at 33 weeks. Their birth weight was 2,000 and 1,900 g, respectively. They were admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at KKUH for 2 weeks. Enduring prolonged struggles due to respiratory related conditions and frequent visits to the Emergency Room during their childhood, they excelled in school graduating with high honors throughout elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools. They joined the College of Medicine, KKUH and graduated with the highest distinction (*summa cum laude*), and were chosen to join the Saudi Board of Pediatric Neurology Residency Program at KKUH. Their story was revealed, while they were doing a round at the same NICU, where they were once cared for 28 years earlier.

On an ordinary day, while making the usual morning round with the team of colleagues which consists of the Residents of the Saudi Board of Pediatric Neurology Residency Program at King Khalid University Hospital (KKUH), headed by Prof. Mustafa A. Salih, Consultant Pediatric Neurologist [1], we passed by the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Sitting at the nurse station was Prof. Turki Al-Kharfy, Consultant Neonatologist [2], who greeted the team and singled us with a special welcome calling us “my daughters.” At first, our team thought that it was just a metaphor notion which usually alludes to respect and recognition that emanates from some type of fatherly connection; but when Prof. Al-Kharfy divulged why he was calling us “daughters,” every one of the team was stunned and flabbergasted. Prof. Al-Kharfy revealed that we had been cared for as preterm identical twins in the same NICU several years earlier; and Prof. Mustafa Salih commented that this is a story which must be told to a wider audience.

Indeed, we were born in in the same hospital (KKUH), where we work now, in October 1990, following preterm delivery at 33 weeks. The birth weight was 2,000 and 1,900 g, respectively,

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Received: 19 December 2018 | Accepted: 19 December 2018

How to cite this article:

AlSheikh RA, AlSheikh RA. A journey from being preterm to pediatric neurology. Sudan J Paediatr. 2018;18(2):72–73.
<https://doi.org/10.24911/SJP.106-1545214668>

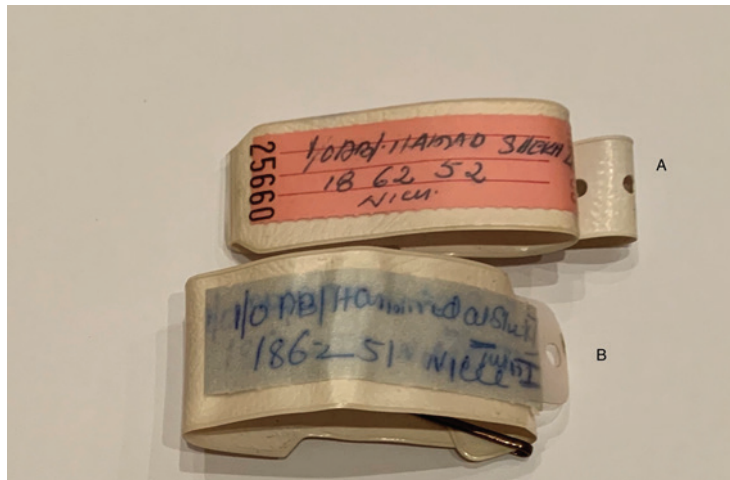


Figure 1. NICU identification bracelets of (A) Rawan AlSheikh and (B) Rana AlSheikh.

and we were admitted to the NICU at KKHU for 2 weeks under the care of Dr. Yohannan, Consultant Neonatologist. Our loving, caring, and fully supportive parents still keep our NICU identification bracelets (Figure 1).

Enduring prolonged struggles due to respiratory related conditions and frequent visits to the Emergency Room during our childhood, we were fortunate to excel in school graduating with high honors throughout elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools. This climaxed in an honor bestowed on us by HRH Princess Hessa Al-Shaalan, wife of the Late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, for being two of the top 10 students in Riyadh Educational Region in 11th and 12th Grades. Subsequently, we were accepted into the College of Medicine, King Saud University after passing the highly competitive Preparatory Year Program.

We were also fortunate to keep track records through the college years, and in 2010, we were honored by the Dean of the College of Medicine for “best academic achievement.” In 2015, we were again fortunate to be honored by HRH Princess Hessa Al-Shaalan, for graduating from the College of Medicine with the highest distinction (*summa cum laude*), during the Graduation Ceremony which was held at King Saud University campus. Our acceptance, thereafter, into the Saudi Board

of Pediatric Neurology Residency Program at the same hospital (KKUH) where we were born, was a thrilling experience. Ironically, some of our workload includes making rounds at the same NICU where we once received the proper and tender medical care 28 years ago. Also ironically, a story published by USA Today newspaper tells a similar story of a preterm born in the same year as ours (1990) [3]. This is the story of pediatric neurology resident Dr. Brandon Seminatore who was born in 1990 at Stanford Children’s Hospital at 29 weeks of gestation, and was cared for in the NICU by Nurse Vilma Wong. He met his caring nurse after 28 years, when he was doing rounds at the hospital where he was born.

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