

Historical Perspectives

Dr Abdeen Khairy: The first doctor, worldwide, who gave his life fighting Ebola epidemic in 1976

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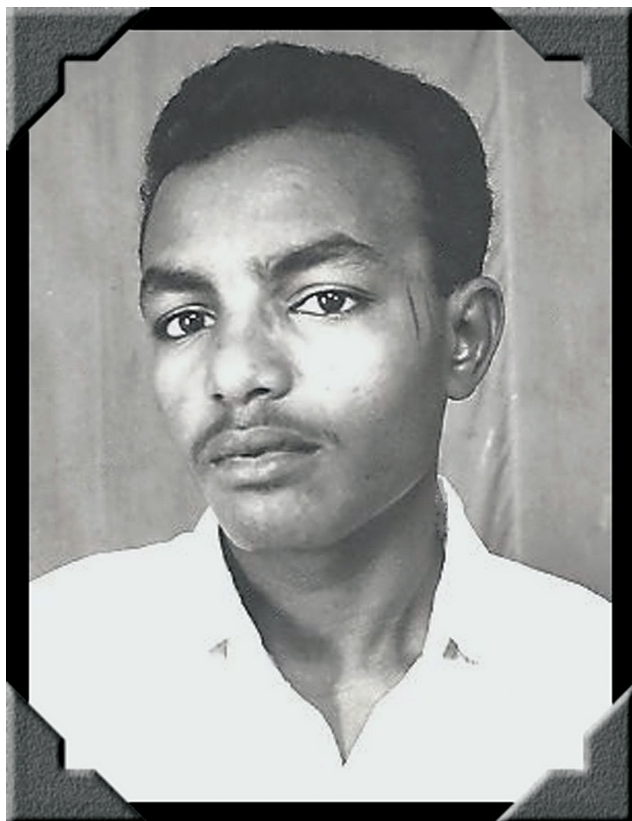


Photo - Dr Abdeen Kairy during the first year at the University of Khartoum, Sudan

Bio-data of Late Dr Abdeen Khairy (1948 – 1976)

- Born in 1948 in Koka Al Mahas near Delgo in Northern Province, Sudan (Figure 1A).
- Elementary and Intermediate schooling in Northern Province.
- Secondary school: Port Sudan Secondary School (Figure 1B).
- Medical education: Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum [1].
- Internship (House Officer): Khartoum Teaching Hospital.
- Medical Officer: Omdurman Teaching Hospital.
- Medical Officer: Maridi Hospital (Currently, South Sudan).

How to cite this:

El Sayed AA. Dr Abdeen Khairy: The first doctor, worldwide, who gave his life fighting Ebola epidemic in 1976. Sudan J Paediatr 2014; 14(2):89 - 93.

Dr. Abdeen Khairy contracted the Ebola virus disease while doing his “Hardship Area Duty” in Maridi District Hospital in Equatoria Province, Sudan (currently, South Sudan) [Figures 2A, 2B and 2C]. He was the only doctor there when alarming numbers of hospital staff were infected, and 41 staff members died [2]. This instilled fear and panic into the Medical Staff who began not to come to Hospital for work except for few brave ones, among whom some died. He was escorted from Maridi to Juba by his colleague Dr. Abdelrahman Ali (Medical Officer in Lewi District Hospital near Mardidi, [Figure 2D]). On interviewing Dr. Abdelrahman, who was born in 1949 in Al Sair (one of Argo Island villages)[Table 1, Figure 3A], he said in September 1976 he was doing his Hardship Area Duty in Lewi District Hospital about 65 miles from Maridi. The Military Commander in Miridi contacted him, telling him that Dr. Abdeen Khairy is very sick in Maridi Hospital and he is bringing him to Lewi by a military vehicle. They reached Lewi late in the evening and they continued without delay to Juba (Figure 2B), reaching it next day morning. Dr. Abdeen was left in the Doctor’s Rest House and Dr. Abdelrahman met Dr. Justin Yak the Regional Minister of Health who gave him 5 return tickets to Khartoum, so that an investigating team (physicians, virologist and microbiologist) can come to Juba, as he did not want Dr. Abdeen to go to Khartoum with the possibility of spreading this haemorrhagic fever, with significantly high mortality, to the North.



Figure 1 – Maps showing (signs): (A) Delgo, (B) Port Sudan and (C) Kosti, Sudan. (Based on Google™ Earth map).

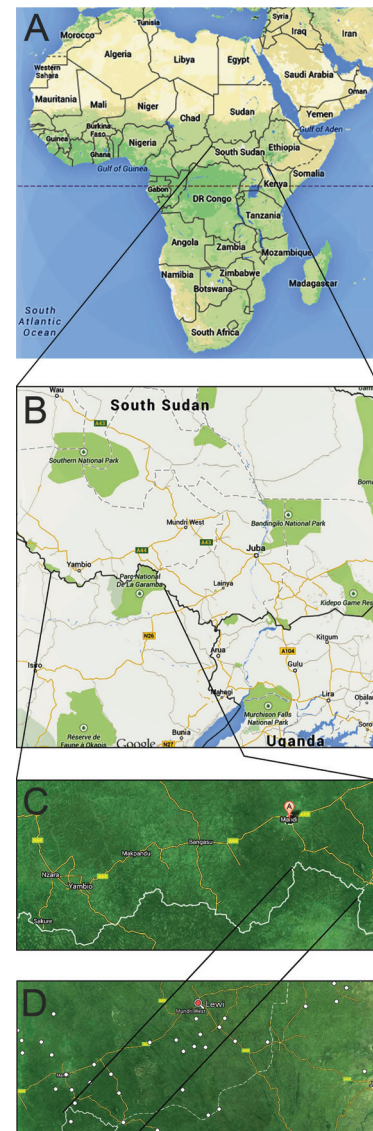


Figure 2 – Maps showing: (A) South Sudan (Formerly, Southern Region of Sudan), (B) Juba, South Sudan, (C) Maridi (Red Sign), South Sudan and Lewi (Red Sign), South Sudan. (Based on Google™ Earth map).

Table 1 - Short biography of characters in the present article**Dr Abdelrahman Ali:**

- Born in 1949 in Al Sair (one of Argo Island villages)[5]
- Elementary School : Al Sair
- Intermediate School : Argo (Figure 3A)
- Secondary School : Atabara (Figure 3B)
- University : Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum, Sudan [1]
- Currently : Consultant Physician Nephrologist, Khartoum, Sudan

Dr Hisham Aman:

- Born in 1947 in Burri, Khartoum, Sudan
- Elementary School : Khartoum
- Secondary School : Khartoum
- University : Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum, Sudan [1]
- Currently : Consultant Physician, Saudi Arabia

Najmeldin Mohamed Nour:

- Born in 1949 in Koka Al Mahas near Delgo in Nothern Province, Sudan (Figure 1A).
- Elementary School : Kosti, Sudan (Figure 1C)
- University : Cairo, Khartoum Branch
- Currently : Accountant in USA
- N.B. Two of his daughters are college of medicine graduates.

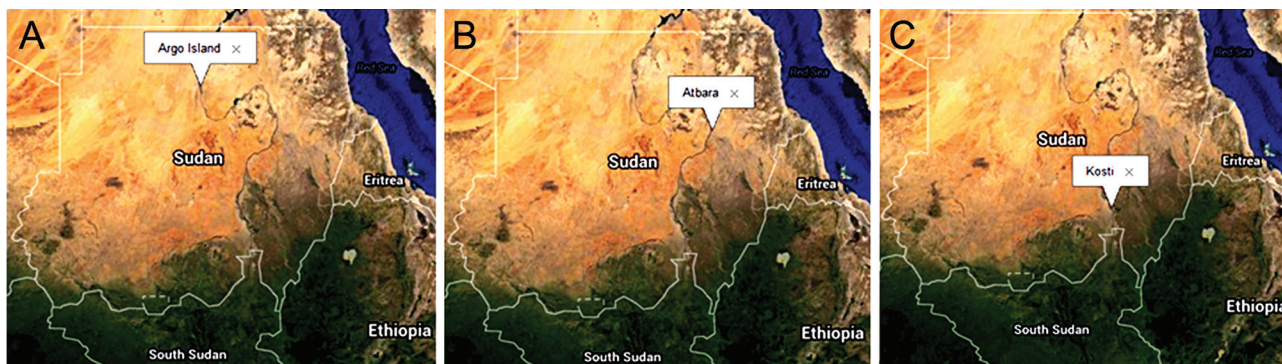


Figure 3 – Maps showing: (A) Argo Island, (B) Atbara and (C) Kosti, Sudan. (Based on Google™ Earth map).

In the same day after arriving in Khartoum, Dr. Abdelrahman met with the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health (Dr. Abbas Mokhtar)[3]. They tried to contact different physicians in the field of tropical medicine but they failed since this was during Eid al-Fitr Holiday (1396 Hijri Calendar). Lastly, they decided to go to Dr. Abdulgaffar Abdulraheem [3], Director of the Tropical Diseases Hospital, Omdurman (1976-1986) in his house (Figure 4). Dr. Abdulgaffar decided to fly next day to Juba accompanied by Dr. Abdelrahman. When they reached Juba, Dr. Abdulgaffar asked the pilot not to leave Juba without

his notice since he might be accompanied by a doctor who is seriously ill. He immediately went to see Dr. Abdeen, and found him extremely ill. He met Dr. Justin Yak, the Regional Minister of Health, and a lengthy discussion was held as Dr. Justin was insisting not to move Dr. Abdeen since the disease may spread in the North. But Dr. Abdulgaffar told him that Dr. Abdeen was moribund and it was better for him to die besides his family. So Dr. Abdulgaffaar, accepting to take full responsibility, flew back with Dr. Abdeen in the same plane to Khartoum. Dr. Abdelrahman Ali went back to his station in Lewi.

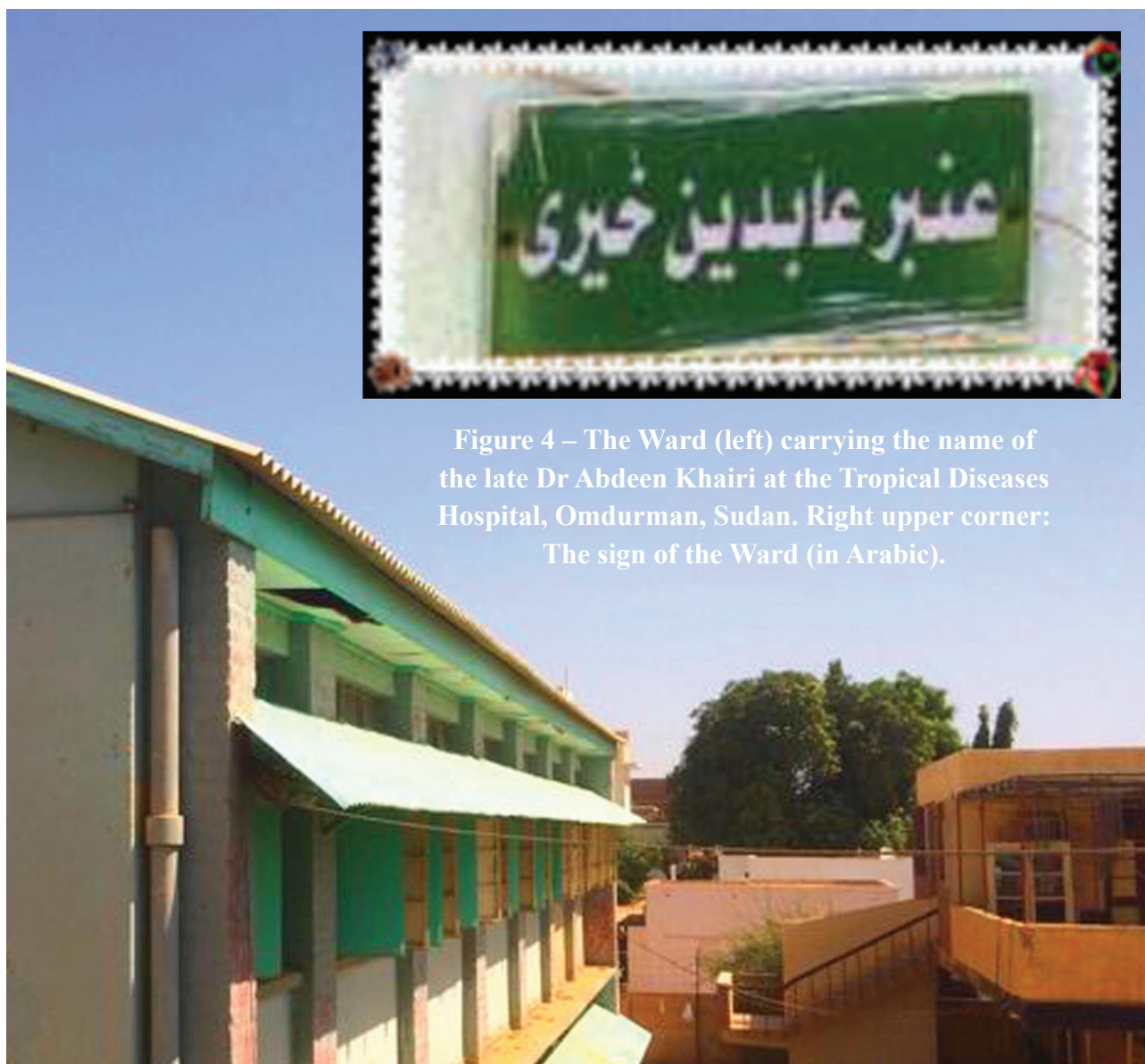


Figure 4 – The Ward (left) carrying the name of the late Dr Abdeen Khairi at the Tropical Diseases Hospital, Omdurman, Sudan. Right upper corner: The sign of the Ward (in Arabic).

On the day of his arrival (September 1976), I was the Medical House Officer on call at Dr. Abdulmoniem Wasfi's Unit; the Registrar was Dr. Hisham Aman. Dr. Khairy was brought by ambulance from Khartoum Airport to the Medical Casualty, and I was among the team (nurses and the ambulance driver) who moved him to stretcher into the Casualty. He was examined by me and I endorsed him to Dr. Aman, the Registrar who made the arrangements for admission to the South Block section of Khartoum Teaching Hospital. He was conscious, but febrile and having some epistaxis. There was a lot of crowd outside the Casualty. But most of the people were scared. After his arrival, a lot of investigations were done and we were not aware of the disease but admitted him as haemorrhagic fever for investigations. As no definite diagnosis was made,

no specific treatment was given. During his short stay in the hospital, his condition deteriorated despite the supportive treatment he was receiving.

He was visited by the late Mr. Ahmed Abdulaziz, the Hospital Director [6,7]. He was attended by his nephew Najmeldin Mohamed Nour. Najmeldeen is the son of Dr. Abdeen's sister. On his interview, he said after the arrival of Dr. Abdeen from Juba, he was attending with him from day one. Initially he was fully conscious and having bleeding from the nose with continuous fever for days. He started to bleed from different sites with bloody vomitus and stools and started to ask about people who died long time ago and was not aware of his surroundings and telling me that I have not seen you for many days. Then, he went in coma and after a day or two, he died.

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