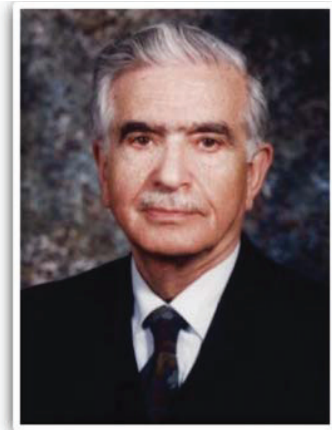


## Obituary

## In the Memory of Dr. Abolhassan Zia-Zarifi (1926 – 2010)

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Dr. Abolhassan Zia-Zarifi

Dr. Abolhassan Zia-Zarifi was born on 20 August 1926 in Lahijan, Gilan Province which lies along the Caspian Sea in northern Iran. He was the eldest son of Haj Issa Zia-Zarifi, a local merchant in Lahijan. Medical practice in Abolhassan's family had around a hundred year history; his grandfather, Hojatollah Hakimbashi was a traditional physician and poet. Abolhassan's paternal uncle, Mirza Abolfazl (Zia-ol Atteba, which means the light of physicians) was also a graduate of medicine of the Dar al-Fonun School in Tehran, which was founded in 1852.<sup>1</sup>

Abolhassan finished his primary school in Lahijan and his high school training in Rasht (the provincial capital of Gilan Province), and in due course, he continued his education initially in biology but after two years he enrolled in the School of Pharmacy of the University of Tehran in 1945 and received his degree in 1952. He married Dr. Touran Zia-Zarifi in 1952.<sup>1-3</sup>

The young and energetic Dr. Zia-Zarifi started his professional career in 1952 in the Ministry of Health (Vezerat-e Behdari) of Isfahan, where he was instrumental in the establishment of the laboratories for control of venereal diseases and addiction.<sup>1</sup>

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Accepted for publication: 8 December 2010

In 1956, he went to Tehran and began to focus on pulmonary diseases, in particular tuberculosis, a common fatal disease of the time. He worked at the first tuberculosis diagnosis laboratory which was supervised by Dr. Mehdi Zolriassatian.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Zia-Zarifi went to England to study microbiology for one year. On his return in 1963, his major achievement was the establishment of the Iranian National Reference TB Laboratory, which was regarded as a turning point in effective diagnosis of tuberculosis.<sup>1</sup> Afterwards, in 1963, Dr. Zia-Zarifi became a member of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases (IUTLD) and later became its vice president for a number of years. He was the Director of IUTLD for several years. In addition, Dr. Zia-Zarifi was a member of the editorial board of IUTLD's periodical for ten years.<sup>2</sup>

In 1968 Dr. Zia-Zarifi continued his training at the Pasteur Institute of Paris and in 1971 he completed his studies on medical laboratory management at the University of Maryland, as well as at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), founded in the USA in 1942.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1975 and 1979, Dr. Zia-Zarifi was appointed as the Director General of Laboratories of the Ministry of Health and during this period, he successfully established over 400 medical laboratories in remote regions with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>1</sup> Due to his outstanding professional endeavors he was nominated