

In Memoriam: Ali Ozden (1942-2020)

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Ali Ozden, MD, professor emeritus in the Department of Gastroenterology of the University of Ankara Medical School, passed away on Aug 30th, 2020. He was 78.

He had served as Chief of the Department from 2000 until his retirement in 2009. He was president of the Turkish Society of Gastroenterology from 1995 to 1997 and he was the founder of the Turkish Journal of Gastroenterology and was its first editor-in-chief from 1990 to 1999. He also was the founder of the Turkish Gastroenterology Foundation. This Foundation printed many books dealing with various topics of gastroenterology. The Foundation also published 3 journals and Ali Ozden used one of the journals which was published only in Turkish to write lengthy editorials where he would express his ideas, suggestions and recommendations on different aspects of gastroenterology on a global as well as on a domestic scale.

Dr. Ozden was an academician in the true sense. He was someone who in his early years first invested heavily in himself. This investment was mainly by means of reading both medically but also para-medically. This was a man whose hobby consisted of visiting book stores, buying books and trying to educate others. He was famous for his ringmorale or better yet, idiom "bilmem anlatabildim mi?" which can be translated as "I'm not sure if I can make myself clear?". Was this simply a ringmorale or an idiom? . According to the Cambridge Dictionary of English a ringmorale is "a set of actions or words without any real purpose." An idiom, on the other hand is "a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own". We think, his expression was leaning towards the meaning of an idiom. As one of his trainees, Prof. Dr. Hakan Bozkaya, has put it, this was the voice of Ozden's "Daemon". In this question was a hidden and insistent order, that the 'passive' listener, should or had to understand, and may have included imposing his sovereignty over the listener.

He was beloved by colleagues, admired for his productivity and hard-work as an academician, and his commitment to nurturing his interest in the progress of a Turkish academic gastroenterology. He published 210 articles, 11 book chapters and gave over 350 invited lectures. Dr. Ozden was brilliant, driven by a moral passion for ethical academic practice and patient-shared decision making. He brought fire to the battles he engaged in and was tireless in the pursuit of a better Turkish academic gastroenterology. He also had a great knowledge and wisdom in many areas, and love to learn. With those qualities he was well known and influential well beyond Ankara University. He was a mentor for many and not restricted to the gastroenterology discipline and thus science but not distant from science as living a reasonable life meant having a link to science for him. He was a natural follower of the enlightenment period and the Renaissance and he adored, as many Turks do, Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. All his life he showed a profound affection towards him. Combining the ideas of Ataturk in the context of the gastroenterology discipline he started links to the Turkic speaking countries of the former Soviet Union and founded the Eurasian Society of Gastroenterology, not with an imperial but with an educational mission. If in Azerbaijan, formal gastroenterology training has started, there is no doubt that Ali Ozden has contributed to its progress. Ali Ozden passed away after a long battle with cancer... The day he died was August 30th, a very special day for Turks- the Day of Victory, which back in 1922, heralded the Foundation of the Republic of Turkey. Ali Ozden as one of the biggest champions of the new Republic and Ataturk, died on this special day; - unlikely to be a mere co-incidence.

Survivors include his dedicated wife Emel and their only child Nuri who works as Assistant Professor of Medicine at the SUNY Upstate Medical University, Syracuse, New York.

Dr. Ali Ozden will be profoundly missed.