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PREFACE

Pursuing Dreams: The Spiritual and Professional Journey of a Neurosurgeon.

This is my life story as a Coptic Christian who grew up in an Egypt where there were limited resources and opportunities along with unfairness to minorities, who came to the USA to become

one of the few to achieve five board certifications in five known medical disciplines, continuing to practice and serve the mission set before me.

My homeland had a rich ancient history, but over the centuries joined the majority of developing countries in the world in downhill economic crises and a political system that is unjust and unfair to many. It was the land where the fathers of early Christendom built the foundation for worldwide Christianity. Today Coptic Christians are considered a minority in Egypt and constitute ten percent of the Egyptian population (ten to twenty million). Much of Christian heritage still exists in Egypt today and Egypt still enjoys respect for the richness of its past culture. My dream would be to visit there again, but to live there would be impossible because of the suffocation of ambitious minds that exists.

I was a neurosurgeon for a young patient where the horse kicked her head and caused massive skull fracture and internal brain hemorrhage. I rushed the patient from the emergency room to the operating room bypassing the internal hospital system. The only thing that matters for me was to take the pressure out of her brain and control the hemorrhage. At that time, the hospital accused me for taking a “brain dead” patient to the operating room. I strongly believed in a statement that I pioneered back then and commonly used today that “time is brain and brain is time”. Every brain cell will suffocate in each second passing by without immediate surgical and medical correction. The young patient and so many others in the 18 RAMSIS F. GHALY, MD, FACS

community recovered completely. It was complete surprise not only to the hospital officials and staff but to the entire community. At that time neuroscience management was far behind in the American communities but not as much in the university downtown medicine. Her closed friend Mary Dressage was a Chicago tribune reporter. She could not believe what she saw and the stories of others. One day, she told me a statement that registered since then; “everyone has a good story to tell”. She is Mary Daniels. Since then, I wrote four series of books listening and writing my patients’ stories and neuroscience care titles “Christianity and the Brain” Volume I:” Faith and medicine and Neuroscience care”, Volume II “The Brain and illness journey”, volume III; “The Brain and the Last hour Journey”, and volume IV; “100 Patients’ stories” of Hope, courage and faith. I believed strongly in “science and faith”.

In an era shying away from faith, I felt obligated to publish my belief in faith in medicine. I named the best neuroscience treatment is “Faith guided Medicine” Faith should never be split apart from medicine. Miracles do happen and God is the Almighty healer and best physician and surgeons. In fact there are so many ancient and recent stories where the Christian saints upon patients’ request performed their surgeries. God heal the wound and guide

the surgeon. God also correct human errors and redirect the correct therapy. So many times God intervene in the behalf of patients and guide the treatment. I have so many patients that were about to receive wrong treatment or ignored and left to suffer knocking in my door for help after listening to their inner heart and Divine message. Faith does not mean at all exclude science and medicine. It is the opposite, it means blessing in medicine and medicine in blessing. A patient dropped her blood sugar to “undetectable” hypoglycemia level for hours after surgery. She fell into a coma from severe depletion of the main brain nutrient. Hospital staff believed she would never recover and become vegetative the rest of her life. Her family never accepted and in faith the sister believed that she would wake up. The family placed the bible and open the chapter 14 Jeremiah “healing” and highlight the verse 14: “{17:14} Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou [art] my praise.”. How can science and mankind explain her complete recovery other than A CHRISTIAN FROM EGYPT 19

superhuman power coming from God, Jesus Christ the healer of all of us and the Divine eternal physician?

I flashed back to my high school vision of having strong faith and work hard and learn much and God will bless what I do. My mission statement and logo were born:

My philosophy is “Do your best, learn in depth, care from your heart and let God do the rest.”

I struggled initially to write about my life story, coming from Egypt as a Coptic Christian it is not part of humility to write or talk about “yourself”. However with the small world we live in and the abundance of social media and communication that made our world small and billions of people connected, I felt sharing my story may be beneficial to many, the good and the bad. As I started writing the book, I began to realize the foundation of my life and my purpose in life. I saw hands of God in taking me from my hand step by step during my upbringing. I had so many questions and I began to find their answers especially why things happened in certain ways. My eyes opened wide and as memories getting expressed in written format, my eyes dripped with tears and my heart with remorse. I lost my mother earlier in 2005; I hurried up and get closer to my dad. I interviewed my dad for 6 months and he was so proud to tell me about his story and what he had done. Some I was aware and many I was not aware. In my last interview with him Christmas of 2012, both he and I felt closer and good reason to publish the book. In less than three months, my dad passed away. I felt more than ever to publish their life 20 RAMSIS F. GHALY, MD, FACS

story. I could not imagine the world without my parents and family. But more importantly, I could not imagine generations to come will not be aware of my parents and entire Fouad and Ghaly families and upbringing. I became far serious to accomplish my parents and my

life stories to be shared with the world and they become the Ghaly (my father and his generations and roots) and Foad (my mother and her generations and roots) legacy forever.

My journey in neuroscience coincided with the birth of modern neuroscience and revolutionary impact in its development. It was the “blooming” time for science and neuroscience in particular. Throughout the years, I saw the exponential growth in knowledge in the field of Neuroscience. Back in late 1960’s and the beginning of 1970’s that mankind witnessed the expansion in knowledge. Neuroscience back then in my early days was “watch and see” and nothing else could be done. I felt the irresistible desire to dedicate my life to neuroscience and its patients. I learned what the best that Egyptian medicine could teach me and it was not enough and no one could stop me. I demanded and persevered for more. I risked everything I have and I left my entire family and friends behind to pursue my Nobel cause that was placed before me. In the beginning of my medical career during medical school, the field was considered sophisticated and intimidated. In addition most of my classmates and others found the field with no interest. There was dissatisfaction in regard to the results of surgery in the brain and the spine. Unlike other bodily surgeries where patients are awake and doing well after surgery. The neurosurgery patients were paralyzed, comatose and not “with it”. It was depressing to make “rounds” in these patients. But it made me more interested to reach these patients, try to “understand” their condition, talk to them even in silence. Many nights and days since medical school years, I would look, listen and touch them and communicate with them even in the spirit. It was unilateral communication and almost wireless throughout the unseen circuits of the universe. Neuroscience patients were paralyzed, comatose and left to die in suffering. It was a common knowledge that if a patient underwent a spine surgery, the patient would end by being “paralyzed” the rest of your life. Similarly, if the patient underwent brain surgery, he or she would definitely end by being in coma, personality disorder, and cognitive dysfunction and became “crazy”.

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Furthermore, the neuroscience care is exhausting, lengthy and depends on the availability of resources and quality skilled dedicated team. Not only, had we realized recently that the brain is the “master mind” in each living cell but each cell has a mind and life as well. Each cell represents a city with fascinating organization. The technology made us go microscopically into the neuronal cell. The science moved further to ultra-cell structures, the “nano-technology”. The recent research identified the operational system in each cell; regulators, inhibitors and commands. The neurological illness looked at from the ultracellular structure change. Not only our intention to understand the neurological illness and provide treatment but also how to prevent them. In fact, science started to clone genes

and promote cell cultures and neuronal factor growth. No longer have neuronal cell had no generation capabilities but they also could replicate, clone and regenerate once again. The field is in ongoing progress. The neurosurgery is performed using the “microscope”, magnified lenses and superb light source magnifying the operative field looking closely to the neuronal tissue. The image-guided surgery, the robotic and computerized equipment were introduced to neurosurgery over the last three decades. **I was so fortunate to witness the development in each of the areas in neuroscience. I am so proud to share with the readers, my lifetime documentary and autobiography in Egypt in volume I and in America in volume II.**

During my neuroscience journey from 1970’s till today, I fought the “good fight” with hospitals and healthcare organizations. I demanded the best for each neuroscience patient. I never give up in a single life regardless of how grim the condition looked. Early on, I cared for so many patients through aggressive and tireless care and recovered from advanced neuroscience illnesses and were told otherwise by many. The present book addresses my neuroscience journey, my passion to neuroscience patients and more of their stories. My write up started back in 2007 when I completed the first volume of my series “Christianity and the brain”. Each volume I, II, III and IV had neuroscience patients’ stories written.

I was and still am reluctant to publish my autobiography. I initially refused and disregarded the idea of it, until good friends approached the subject with a different perspective, one that I at first overlooked. Many important events are happening in the Middle East today. Globalization and social media has brought countries closer and perhaps one day the entire world will be like the USA, a melting pot of people living under the same Pledge of Allegiance and Declaration of Independence, a land of opportunity for the people and by the people. I will not view myself as a “writer,” but as a common man who wishes to share his story and views. I spent close to fifty years in schooling, research and reading. I loved reflection and daily fantasies.

Volume I is focused primarily in my journey since I was born back in 1957 at Cairo, Egypt. After I finished writing volume I, I realized that it is the story of my parents with ten children. I presented Egypt not only as our home country but also as our Coptic Christian Orthodox home since Saint Mark breached Alexandria during the Roman Empire in the first century. I outlined so many of cultural habits and Christian ancient rituals. I was born and raised in poverty but rich in values and Christian faith. My parents taught us “nothing is impossible for God” and we could one day reach the top and become “top” doctors and healers. My mother raised my sisters to become one day far better than her in gaining independence in a society where women could not go school, work, vote or go anywhere

without their husbands signature. It is a story of pursuing the dreams and overcoming the impossible. We had seen it all and till today I will not how did we overcome the obstacles and hardship; the sickness, the poverty, the Christian persecution and the extreme declining in socioeconomic. It is all because of grace of God and His protection and mercy to His children. As I saw the recent events of the Middle East and rise in Egypt and other Middle East, I wanted to present to the world Egypt as I know. As I saw the gradual islamization of Africa including Egypt, I realized that I must show Egypt as the home of ancient Christians and martyrs and the refugee land of the Jews and convent people of God.

I fell in love with the brain and the nervous system. I believed early on it is the human “treasure” that God have given to His children and human race. During my anatomy classes, the nervous system appeared complex and so difficult and many of us felt intimidated.

I established my cause in the second year of medical school and I prayed that God make me closer to the brain that He created. I

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fantasized about putting together Faith and Neuroscience and tie them together. I confront my challenger the brain and kneeled with humility to its power and potentials. I further developed passion for neuroscience patients since medical school. They were all left to die back in 1970’s in Egypt. Once I graduated from medical school and completed internship and military duty, I reached a dead wall. I could not pursue any of my dreams and my only hope was America. I did not have a relative or anyone to help me. Entering to America was not easy. It took me five years till I finally was boarding a TWA airplane heading to America, my dream land and my next home. This concluded my Volume I and volume II about to start. It is a story of so many people raised in developing countries and wished to pursue the dreams. There are so many similar stories and even much stronger.

Volume II is focused in my journey in America and in

healthcare. Until today I remember my first day arriving to New York airport and watching the magnificent country of the world USA. I was so shocked and lost. I perhaps cannot find the words to express the way I should. I started from “ground zero” and in 30 years of struggle, determination and perseverance I reached my dreams and became a recognized American Professor in some of the most difficult medical and surgical disciplines. I was lost in the streets of Chicago and my dreams were not to be found. Many people including my home country people laughed about what I wanted to be. The good people were small in number and their services were even limited. But they were irreplaceable and instrumental in my success. I met the good and the bad and no one to guide me or filter the good from bad. I was lost and no longer get a free advice. My comfort around me I left them back home and I am here all alone. I came from thousands of miles away and completely different culture. I tried to

find commonalities but they were few and many were misunderstood. I prayed to my lord Christ every day and I worked hard as many people will do pursuing their dreams. Day after day and I saw no hope. I did not realize that each day pass, it was a “plus” and more in my “resume”. Door after another started to open. **When I came to America I said to myself “if my hometown did not give me the opportunity, other countries should do the same and anything in addition is a gain for me”. In fact, early on, I asked of myself to work hundred folds in order to be accepted for a position or a job**

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in America or any other foreign land. The hardship was not without blessing and for me it was a joy because I came from a land with no opportunity. The minute I “smelled” an opportunity and I hold so tight and I worked so hard to keep knocking doors till I was able to obtain the full qualifications and certifications in five American boards; Neurological Surgery, Anesthesiology, Pain Management, Neuro-Intensive Care and Independent medical examiner. I published so many articles and books. I was finally awarded the professorship of neurological surgery and anesthesiology at UIC, Chicago, USA.

I owed to Chicago, Illinois, my home state; it took me and made me who I am. Without Cook County hospital and University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), I will not achieve what I have achieved today. I was rejected by so many others and I had submitted thousands of applications and got denial one after another. I had no shoulder to hold on and many opportunistic took advantage. But all made me stronger and accomplished so much in limited time. I came from a home living with my parents and surrounded by caring family and for my dreams I was thrown in the streets alone in the most dangerous neighborhood. I had never realized tortuous roads ahead. I had no family. **While I was writing this part of the story, I wanted people to look around them and perhaps they come across somebody like me that wanted the “Good Samaritan”. It was not the church; it was not the social organization. It was not charity groups. The people that needed help are away from our sight. They are in places that no one dares to live. The people in need cannot find their ways to churches, social organizations or charity groups. These charity groups need to search for the needy and find and protect the lost ones. The “good Samaritan” went and found the sick and healed his wounds.** When finally I could knock the door of these organizations, they denied helping me. The only one that never denied me or left me is my Lord, Jesus Christ, the savior of the world. I would pray to Him and talk one to one every minute and second.

As I became quintuple board certified and well established neurosurgeon and anesthesiologist, I asked how many people like me if they just get the opportunity. Where would I be if United States closed its door to me? One fact I know very well

without United States, I would have accomplished nothing. I had

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no future back in Egypt. I remembered my mother words while she was crying and tears running in her eyes, she said; “you must leave Egypt and go to find your future. There is no future for you her” Then she said; “it is hard from me to see my own kids and my flesh leave and be away from my sight but I cannot be selfish” She continued saying; “I brought you all up to stand in your feet but I must let you go search for your future, my selfishness cannot stand in front of your dreams”. She then completed by saying “I do not have somebody to care for you or check in you but I will pray for God to send the good people in your way and send the bad ones away from you, go God with you” Because of the love of my parents and the dreams they put in us, five children left Egypt and pursued their dreams in Europe and America. The eight children and grand children, God blessed them so much. I am sure because of the good seeds of my parents of 7000 years from the blessed country of Egypt and my parent’s prayers day and night in front of the King of kings and the Lamb of God, the Christ the Lord.

As I continued to pursue my medical and neuroscience dreams in United States, I came across new set of challenges. From competition I became prolific, from diversity I became understanding, and from the adversaries I became stronger. By then I worked in several healthcare systems. By 2007, I worked in eight healthcare systems including national, social, government, university, and private full employment, partly employed and complete independent. **I was placed in good position to present my views and experiences in these systems.**

Healthcare talks continued to be one of the “hottest issues” in United States and worldwide. Understandingly so, there are so many people are living now longer and the healthcare cost rise higher and higher. **I realized that Volume II is timely to address mine and many others’ concerns. The concepts and essentials of healthcare for humans are losing the values. Technology -operated medicine should not universally take over patient-centered hands-on medicine.**

I started when healthcare was all about saving lives and new medical and surgical discoveries, and not about “cut costs” and be smart businessmen and average doctors. With my 30 years of full dedication to medicine, I came across so many patients’ care management issues and concerns. I love so much patient’s care and

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in particular neuroscience patients. As so many physicians, I went to medicine for patients. Each healthcare system has the good and bad. **Medicine is a sacred job and it is about service and not business. Medicine is about healing and not about obstacles to healing. But it is about patients and skilled and cared doctors and nursing working with smart technology for the best of the patients. It is**

not about business and enforces healthcare industry as one of the giant corporate. By 2014, I realized that my book was not only accomplishing my dreams in America, the great land of opportunity but also about my healthcare journey and views.

What should I say! Thank you to United States for opening the doors to me, to the mentors and to the patients that I love most? It was not without a price, I lost my parents and their ten siblings of each. By the time, I accomplished my dream they were gone. I miss them so much and I felt I let them down and I know I did. I could have done better. But I have them in my heart every day and because of them I am pursuing the dreams. It was their dreams as well. I feel them more and more as I am getting older and closer to completion of my journey. As we say in my church, they are in the victorious church of heaven and we are in the church facing the tribulation of the world. As a disclaimer, the book of two volumes represents my personal views, opinions and insights and your discretion is advised. They are my personal thoughts and not the thoughts of others. I hope for the readers to take the good and learn from the bad. I apologize to so many of you who will view my strong opinions as negative. I have much of passion for neuroscience and patients' care.

As I completed both volumes and memories of life story and my entire family, I will encourage each of you to do the same. It is a great reflection to who we are and the great nature of humanity in us. It provides explanation to so many questions and establish out foundation and purpose in life. Most importantly, It made me closer to my Lord Jesus Christ who I saw His hands in everyday of my life. It got me closer to my family and made me appreciate and love people even more. I felt so blessed and proud to express the legacy of my inheritance of 7000 years, everyone raised and born in Egypt. The book made Egypt and America one country under one God despite the fact that in the past leaving your home was considered unfaithful to your country. It put closure to so many

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hard feelings and disappointments. It gave me strength to move forward in my life and look for tomorrow since I wrote about the past and I experiences yesterday. The two volumes represent joy and peace to hand our history to the generations to come. I ask for your prayers and love and to find the book of no offence to no one and to fulfill the good cause.

Thank you to my parents, siblings, friends, all family members, staff, teachers and mentors, patients, my home country Egypt and my new home United States. I will be forever grateful.

Respectfully

Ramsis F Ghaly, MD, FACS

HIGHLIGHTS

HIGHLIGHTS

My medical and neurosurgical qualifications as follows:

- A COPTIC CHRISTIAN WITH EXTREME PASSION TO NEUROSCIENCE. I LEFT EGYPT FOR MY DREAMS AND ESCAPE THE PERSECUTION
- DID MOST OF MY TRAINING AND FOREVER GRATEFUL TO COOK COUNTY AND UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO FOR 30 YEARS. FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.ghalyneurosurgeon.com AND www.ghalyneuroscience.com

MEDICAL AND NEUROSURGICAL TRAINING:

- GRADUATED FROM AIN SHAMS UNIVERSITY, CAIRO, EGYPT
- NEUROPHYSIOLOGY FELLOWSHIP AND RESEARCH (1986)
- NEUROTRAUMA FELLOWSHIP AND RESEARCH (1987)
- ANESTHESIOLOGY AND CRITICAL CARE RESIDENCY (1990)
- NEUROANESTHESIOLOGY FELLOWSHIP (1991)
- NEUROLOGICAL SURGERY RESIDENCY (1995)
- 28 RAMSIS F. GHALY, MD, FACS
- PAIN MANAGEMENT (1997)
- NEUROCRITICAL CARE (2008)
- INDEPENDENT EXAMINER (2008)

AMERICAN BOARD CERTIFICATIONS ON QUINTUPLE DISCIPLINES:

- 1) NEUROSURGERY
 - 2) ANESTHESIOLOGY
 - 3) NEUROCRITICAL CARE
 - 4) PAIN MANAGEMENT
 - 5) INDEPENDENT MEDICAL EXAMINER
- PROFESSOR OF ANESTHESIOLOGY AT UIC (2010)
 - PROFESSOR OF NEUROSURGERY AT UIC (2012)
 - ACTIVE PRACTICE IN ANESTHESIOLOGY, NEUROANESTHESIOLOGY AND PAIN SINCE 1991
 - ACTIVE PRACTICE NEUROSURGEON SINCE 1995
 - AUTHOR AND RESEARCHER FOR HUNDREDS OF PUBLICATIONS

THANK YOU TO ALL MY MENTORS, TEACHERS AND PATIENTS OVER THE THREE DECADES