

Brussels, 2nd July, 2024

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I am writing to share the sad news that our President, Professor Akhtar Hussain, has passed away. The President was promoting IDF activity in Brazil when he started to feel unwell. He was admitted to a local clinic for tests but, unfortunately, died as the result of a sudden heart attack. Despite the best efforts of the healthcare team, they were unable to revive him.

President Akhtar demonstrated heartfelt loyalty to the Federation and the diabetes cause over many years of service. He worked tirelessly to enhance global advocacy, improve diabetes care, and make a real difference for those living with diabetes, particularly for those in low and middle-income countries. His contributions to the field of diabetes are invaluable and his absence will be deeply felt by all who had the privilege of working with him.

As a Vice President of IDF (2016-17, 2020-21), Professor Akhtar oversaw the successful expansion of our education activities, particularly the IDF School of Diabetes. Since its launch, the IDF School has grown to welcome close to 90,000 healthcare professionals from more than 200 countries. During his tenure as President, he led the development and approval of a new strategic plan informed by the bold new vision of securing access to affordable, quality diabetes care and education to improve the lives of people with diabetes worldwide.

President Akhtar's commitment to making this vision a reality was evidenced by his championing of new evidence-based guidelines to provide much-needed clarity and guidance in the complex field of diabetes management. He was very much looking forward to presenting these new guidelines at our World Diabetes Congress in Bangkok next April.

A tireless advocate for establishing and strengthening collaboration and engagement with key stakeholders such as national governments, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Prof. Akhtar was convinced of the importance of working with IDF members and advocacy networks to bring about lasting change at the national level. For this reason, he insisted we hold our Board meetings in different countries to meet with our members and other key stakeholders concerned with improving the diabetes response, to not only understand the pressing needs in the regions but also to learn from the successes our members have achieved.

His commitment to keeping diabetes high on the political agenda inspired his decision to establish the IDF Global Diabetes Ambassador programme to recognise outstanding work undertaken at the national level to further the diabetes cause and improve access to care. It was fitting that Bangladesh, his country of birth, was the first country to be recognised. In 2022, he delivered the invitation to become the inaugural ambassador in person to Her

Excellency Sheikh Hasina, the Honourable Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Strengthening the diabetes response and growing the IDF community drove his passion to open up the Federation to include individual members and develop a fellowship programme in advance of the World Diabetes Congress in Bangkok. Nothing put a bigger smile on the President's face than when a new individual member joined the programme or a new application came in to become an IDF Fellow.

In addition to his work with the International Diabetes Federation, Professor Akhtar contributed to global diabetes research throughout a career that spanned over 30 years, notably initiating primary prevention programmes in Bangladesh and Pakistan. In recognition of his contribution to diabetes, he received the Bangladesh National Award in Diabetes in 2011 and 2012.

More than a leader, mentor, and colleague, President Akhtar was a friend, and like many, I will feel his loss deeply. I was always inspired by his passion and energy for people living with diabetes. The Board and I will continue the Federation's work to improve the lives of people living with diabetes and prevent diabetes in those at risk with the same unwavering passion and determination that Prof. Akhtar demonstrated during his presidency. We will honour his legacy and respect his desire to unite the global diabetes community to pursue our vision and fulfil our mission.

Our most heartfelt sympathies are with his family, including his wife Cristina and young son Andrew.

With great sorrow and respect,



Prof. Peter Schwarz

Prof. Dr. med. habil. Peter E. H. Schwarz, MBA

President-elect of the International Diabetes Federation (IDF)