

My mentor

Mentors—What we aspire to be: Hasan Alam, MD, FACS

by *Christian Shults, MD*

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this essay describing how my relationship with Hasan Alam, MD, FACS, has had a positive impact on my personal and professional development. I worked with Dr. Alam during the 2006–2007 academic year and was a research fellow in his laboratory at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in Boston. During that year, I met individually and weekly with Dr. Alam to discuss the progress of my research. Through our collaboration and those meetings, Dr. Alam ultimately became a trusted friend and mentor.

First and foremost, what was most meaningful to me was Dr. Alam's example of success and fulfillment in an age of surgery wherein many are discontent and pessimistic. Aside from being an excellent clinician, Dr. Alam is genuinely passionate about research, and that passion for discovery, as well as his track record of success, made me very eager to work with him. His example and his life have renewed my belief that one can find fulfillment in surgery. Having come to the U.S. as an international medical graduate, Dr. Alam worked his way into a competitive residency, received his first of several R01 grants within two years of finishing residency, and is now a rising star in trauma and an associate professor of surgery at MGH. He is a living tribute to the notion that regardless of the odds, one may chart his or her own destiny if he or she is committed.

Our mentors become the stewards of our professional selves and facilitate our advancement into the professional world. What Dr. Alam has done so well is to create an environment with abundant opportunity for those who will take it and run. He has established a reputation and expectation of success and has continually dedicated whatever time required to review projects, abstracts, manuscripts, and presentations. I feel that my time spent with Dr. Alam has launched my professional surgical career, has given me exposure to the national stage, and has opened my eyes to many opportunities I would not have otherwise been aware of.



Dr. Alam



Dr. Shults

I can't emphasize enough the importance of finding mentors, those who have become what we aspire to be. First and foremost, their examples validate and broaden our aspirations, and from them we learn attitudes, methods, and patterns of success. I think such relationships are both a source of inspiration and instruction for the mentored and, I imagine, quite gratifying to the mentor as well. Perhaps the greatest testament to this relationship is that it has endured beyond my time in the laboratory, as Dr. Alam has continued to support my efforts and continues to be genuinely interested and encouraging in my pursuits. I still look forward to our interactions, and I have no doubt that he continues to be committed to my success. For that, I am grateful. □

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