

AUB alum makes rare diagnosis that saves patient's life

Thursday, September 30, 2010

AUB alumnus Wael Karamah (BS '92, MD '04) recently made headlines after diagnosing a 45-year-old woman with a very rare and hard-to-detect adrenal gland tumor.

The pheochromocytoma tumor is a rare disease that affects the adrenal glands above the kidneys and afflicts only one out of one million people.

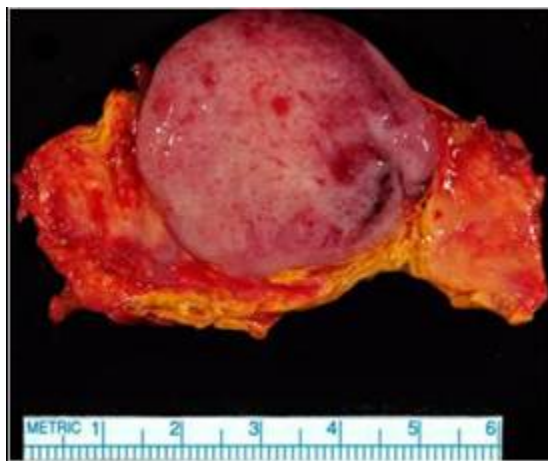


Dr. Karamah, a family doctor currently working at Sheikh Khalifa Medical City (SKMC) in Abu Dhabi, recently made the diagnosis which had eluded several doctors for more than one year.

Dr. Karamah also diagnosed the patient with diabetes, high cholesterol, and high calcium concentrations in the blood which led him to conclude that a tumor exists. Moreover, other symptoms, such as palpitations, flushing, headache, and sweating which are potentially caused by high concentrations of certain hormones (adrenaline, noradrenaline and their metabolites) secreted by this rare tumor also pointed Dr. Karamah to the same conclusion.

Tests results and a CT scan confirmed his diagnosis and showed a 5-centimeter tumor in the right adrenal gland above the kidney. The tumor was also squeezing on one of the main veins of the heart.

As soon as the diagnosis was made, the patient was transferred to the Mayo Clinic in the United States, where the tumor was removed and the patient was discharged after two days, according to a SKMC press release.



In a September 2010 interview with Emirates-based The National Newspaper, Dr. Karamah said that this kind of tumor, which is extremely rare, becomes threatening if the patient is wrongly diagnosed. However, if correctly diagnosed, the surgical treatment will ensure a 100-percent recovery. In another interview with the Khaleej Times, Dr. Karamah explained that this tumor could be fatal if it was not properly removed and treated during surgery.

Dr. Karamah's findings on the pheochromocytoma tumor are currently being reviewed at the Mayo Clinic and are expected to be published soon.