

Losing a Loved One: When Doves Cry



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

AND my last ask is: if you're someone's sister, the next time you see your brother, please hug him... as tightly as you can, for as long as you want, because that's all I want to do every time I see those photos. But I will never be able to hug Fahim again."

News on this emotional tribute to the slain technological entrepreneur Fahim Saleh is making the rounds. The quote here is from Ruby Saleh, the 41-year-old sister of the late Gokada founder and chief executive officer, who was murdered last July in his luxury apartment in Manhattan. Fahim was 33 years old when he was brutally killed; the murderer dismembered his body with an electric saw. Fahim's elder sister Ruby recalled the fright she received when Fahim had his first nosebleed as a toddler. She cringed at the thought of encountering the mutilated body of her "beautiful brother". "Thirty years later, I was learning that Fahim's head and limbs had been discarded in a trash bag. Someone had cut my brother's body into pieces and tossed the pieces into a garbage bag, as if his life, his body, his existence had had no meaning or value," she wrote in a blog post for Medium.com.

As the family put Fahim's body

for the final rest, the father sobbed, saying, "Fahim Saleh, didn't I tell you not to dye your hair? Didn't I tell you?" and the mother cried, "Don't go!"

I went through the anecdotal snippets to piece together the life of a middle-class family. The father, a graduate of computer science, managed a teaching position in Saudi Arabia in the early eighties. He moved to Louisiana as a doctoral student while his wife was working at a laundrette. The family struggled in the new country; their only dining out was on Saturdays at Domino Pizza's USD 3.99 deal. The young Fahim showed his "business" acumen by selling candies at school at 10, or making his first earning by making a web page for teenagers at the age of 13. He paid for his own graduation, and eventually became a successful entrepreneur. All dreams disembodied—hacked to pieces.

Somewhere else, in a country where Fahim originated from, almost at the same time, a 36-year-old retired special force officer was also murdered. Major Sinha Rashed Khan took an early retirement from the army to pursue his dream of becoming a travel journalist. He was making travel documentaries for a YouTube channel called "Just Go." He was on location in Cox's Bazar when he was shot dead by police. There are different versions of the story which are now being investigated by uniformed men, and I have nothing to comment, except for what has already been reported.

The car in which Major Sinha was

travelling was stopped at a police checkpoint; the other passenger was dragged to the back while one officer shot Sinha at point-blank range. Four bullets in his chest—reminds one of Camus's *The Outsider* where the protagonist Meursault shoots an Arab by the sea beach. Meursault knew that his gun "had shattered the harmony of the day, the exceptional silence of a beach where I'd been happy." Still he "fired four more times at the

that existed between a brother and a sister. Losing a loved one is never easy, especially when there is no rational way to explain the death.

"If they were so angry with him, they could have taken him to the police station, shot at legs. But why did they shoot at my brother's chest? Who ordered this? We don't know. We want justice. We won't get him back, however we try. Just Justice." (Prothom Alo English, August 9, 2020).



Fahim Saleh (left) and Sinha Md Rashed Khan.

motionless body where the bullets lodged without leaving a trace. And it was like knocking four quick times on the door of unhappiness." The killing of Sinha resonates a remorseless reality.

Major Sinha's sister Sharmin Shahriar Ferdous offered an emotional plea for justice that echoes the same sentiment of Ruby Saleh. Sharmin told the media of the strong bond



The lives of two men in the prime of their youth, tinged with dreams and vibrancy, cut short by assailants. Fahim and Sinha are dead. But they are survived by their close relatives as well as friends, neighbours, and co-workers. The number of individuals affected is far greater than the number of two direct homicide victims here. As we read the personal accounts of these "homicide survivors", we also become

"co-victims". I know the textbook definition will not include readers and viewers as homicide survivors, but when we form a bond of empathy with the people we are reading about, Sharmin and Ruby become our sisters. Their cry is the cry of a dove that ends peace, and makes us restless.

It is probably easy for me to claim myself as a homicide survivor sitting in my comfortable niche on the other side of the TV or computer screen. Little research has been done to find out the trauma and anxieties of a homicide survivor. We often say, "she or he is lucky to be dead." We say it to reflect on the absurdity that surrounds us. We console ourselves by thinking that death is a less absurd phenomenon. Going through the two sisters' accounts, I was thinking of the stress factors that survivors often have to contend with. These include economic stressors, stigmatisation, fear of recurrence, anxiety when encountering reminders of the event, negative beliefs about themselves and the world, and feelings of guilt and responsibility. Then there are issues of media intrusion especially when the criminal justice systems are involved. There are threats of revenge by the suspected perpetrators. The co-victims of murder are in danger. We are all in danger.

I hope the murderers love their sisters too! I hope the policemen love their sisters too.

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Sinovac's Covid-19 vaccine shows great promise

This is a statement given out by a group of scientists linked to icddr,b

A number of articles recently published in the media have questioned the merits of the Sinovac's inactivated SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) vaccine and whether the government of Bangladesh should now approve a Phase III trial of the vaccine to determine how well it protects Bangladeshi adults against SARS-CoV-2. Many of the published negative comments are unfounded. Here we hope to set the record straight and alleviate any reservations the government may have in approving the proposed Phase III trial.

Misleading assertions

The Sinovac vaccine, which consists of fully inactivated SARS-CoV-2 virus, in fact shows great promise. This vaccine has already received extensive testing in animals, showing it to be safe, to induce robust anti-SARS-CoV-2 immune responses, and, very importantly, to protect vaccinated primates against SARS-CoV-2 disease when they are experimentally challenged with fully virulent SARS-CoV-2 virus. In addition, the vaccine has been administered to hundreds of Chinese adults under strict experimental protocols, demonstrating that it is safe and induces serum antibody responses that neutralise (e.g. render it harmless) the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

One false assertion has been that the Sinovac vaccine has not induced neutralising antibodies against SARS-CoV-2. In fact, the Sinovac vaccine, when given in two doses, induced virus-neutralising antibodies in the serum of over 90 percent of vaccinated Chinese adults. It is important to recognise that although we think such serum antibodies are relevant to protection against SARS-CoV-2 disease in humans, this is still just an assumption based on experience with non-SARS-CoV-2 viral infections. Similar misleading statements have been made about "poor" T cell responses to the Sinovac vaccine. In fact, the Sinovac vaccine is documented to elicit T cell immune

responses, but here too we currently lack hard scientific data on how relevant, if at all, such responses are to the prevention of SARS-CoV-2 infection of humans.

Another assertion has been that the vaccine may actually worsen SARS-CoV-2 disease through a phenomenon called "immune enhancement". In fact, immune enhancement is a potential concern for all SARS-CoV-2 vaccine candidates, regardless of their production technology, and the Food



File photo of a woman holding a small bottle labelled with a "Vaccine COVID-19" sticker and a medical syringe in this illustration taken April 10, 2020.

SOURCE: REUTERS/DADO RUVIC/ILLUSTRATION

and Drug Administration (FDA) of the US is requiring that all SARS-CoV-2 vaccines be evaluated for this possible side-effect in Phase III clinical trials in humans. All trials of the Sinovac vaccine are following this guidance. That said, the primate SARS-CoV-2 challenge studies conducted with the Sinovac SARS-CoV-2 vaccine revealed no evidence of disease enhancement in the challenged animals.

A third assertion has been that the results of the studies of the Sinovac vaccine have not been subjected to proper review. This is patently false. The results for the preclinical

studies of the vaccine in animals have appeared in one of the world's most prestigious journals, *Science*. Results for Phase I and II studies have been submitted for publication, and are available as a prepublication online in *medRxiv*. Importantly, all of these data have been carefully reviewed by the Ethical and Research review committees at the icddr,b and by the Bangladesh Medical Research Council, and have been submitted for review to the Directorate General

scientific basis for this assertion. Killed virus technologies are currently used for effective, licensed vaccines against influenza and polio. In contrast, no human vaccine using mRNA or adenovirus vector technology has ever been licensed on the basis of well-conducted Phase III trials, and several vaccine candidates against other infectious diseases using the adenovirus vector technology have failed to protect humans. This is not to say that these newer approaches will fail, but rather that SARS-CoV-2 vaccines based on the well-established approach used by Sinovac, as well as on the newer approaches, should all undergo evaluation in human Phase III trials if supported by preclinical evidence and human Phase I-II study data showing safety and immunogenicity—as is the case for the Sinovac vaccine.

Planned Phase III trial

Based on the very promising results of preclinical studies in animals and human studies in Chinese adults for the Sinovac SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, Sinovac now plans to conduct Phase III, individually randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled trials in order to determine the safety and efficacy of the vaccine against human SARS-CoV-2 disease when tested in adults in Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Chile, Indonesia and Bangladesh. The trials in Brazil have already commenced. These trials have been designed to ensure that results will meet the highest regulatory standards for vaccine licensure. It is critical that these trials be conducted in multiple countries and differing populations as the epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2 differs from population to population, and different human populations may respond differently to any given vaccine.

In Bangladesh, we plan to enrol 4,200 literate healthcare workers (doctors, nurses, ward attendants) who have not yet been infected by SARS-CoV-2, from seven hospitals in metropolitan Dhaka that are caring

for SARS-CoV-2 patients. Participants will be randomised at a 1:1 ratio to receive two doses of either the Sinovac vaccine or a placebo via intramuscular injection. Intensive follow-up of all participants will be conducted to detect adverse reactions to the vaccine as well as SARS-CoV-2 disease. Appropriate management will be provided for all illnesses of the participants. Although all participants will be followed in this manner for a year after dosing—to make sure that the vaccine is safe and does not cause immunological enhancement of SARS-CoV-2 disease—we expect that enough SARS-CoV-2 cases will have occurred within six months of dosing to draw conclusions about the ability of the vaccine to protect against SARS-CoV-2 disease.

Benefit to Bangladesh and to the world

An effective vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 will save countless lives in Bangladesh and around the world. If the Phase III trial of the Sinovac vaccine in Bangladesh demonstrates the vaccine to be safe and protective, Sinovac has agreed to provide over 110,000 free vaccine doses for the nation. And more importantly, Sinovac has committed to transfer the technology for production of the vaccine, as well as bulk vaccine, to a qualified Bangladeshi producer at a discounted price to meet the needs of the larger population of Bangladesh. We believe that this trial, if successful, will be a great credit to the people and government of Bangladesh. Moreover, it will directly benefit the citizens of Bangladesh, and the world. But time is of the essence, and we thus urge the government of Bangladesh to give the proposed trial its approval and full support.

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The statement has been jointly given by Prof John D. Clemens, MD Executive Director, icddr,b, Prof Jan Holmgren, MD, PhD, University of Goteborg, Sweden, Dr K. Zaman, MBBS, MPH, PhD, Senior Scientist, icddr,b, Dr Firdausi Qadri, PhD, Senior Scientist, icddr,b, and Prof Allen Ross, MD, PhD, Senior Director, Infectious Diseases Division, icddr,b.

QUOTABLE Quote

MEISTER ECKHART
(1260-1328)
German theologian, philosopher and mystic.

What we plant in the soil of contemplation, we shall reap in the harvest of action.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Fable finish

6 Enter a password, say

11 Wonderland visitor

12 Chicago airport

13 1998 Usher song

15 Cain's mother

16 Use a spade

17 Some amount of

18 Waiter's job

20 Garden tool

21 Squid's squirt

22 Scarlett's home

23 Extends across

26 Autumn quaff

27 Overdue

28 That girl

29 Completely

30 Is furious

34 Neptune's domain

35 Scoundrel

36 Bullring cry

37 Invariable

40 "Enigma Variations" composer

41 Palmer, to his fans

42 Appears

43 Stair part

DOWN

1 Lion features

2 Green shade

3 Kitchen gadget

4 Top card

5 Intros

6 Skier's spot

7 Surprised sounds

8 Noble knight

9 Magnetite, e.g.

10 Annual celebration

14 Shaving mishap

19 Arbor climber

22 Makes bows

23 Cuts drastically

24 Bitter brew

25 Not in custody

26 Cheese choice

28 Penn of "Milk"

30 Battle reminders

31 Speckled horses

32 Cow of ads

33 Discourage

38 River blocker

39 Cal. column

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BEETLE BAILEY

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