



MOTHERS in MEDICINE

The Daily Star
DHAKA SATURDAY
MAY 9, 2026
BAISHAKH 26, 1433 BS
S1



Medicine demands precision, endurance, and compassion. Motherhood asks for the very same things, every single day. For women who carry both responsibilities, the line between profession and personal life often disappears. They move from hospital wards to homes without pause, caring for strangers and family alike. This Mother's Day, we honour mothers in medicine whose strength is found not only in saving lives, but in quietly holding their own worlds together.

ILLUSTRATION:
BIPLOB KUMAR CHAKROBORTY



#HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY



CELEBRATING A CARE AS UNIQUE AS THE BOND YOU SHARE

Before your first breath, you were sustained by a lifeline of pure compassion the world's most profound form of care.

At UNICO Hospitals, we honor that sacred bond. Our specialized medical excellence is as deep and personal as the touch that started it all. Because for the one who gave you everything, only the most unique care will do.



Scan here
to visit us

23 Green Road, Dhaka-1205, Bangladesh.

096 77 66 77 66



MOTHERS in MEDICINE

The Daily Star
DHAKA SATURDAY
MAY 9, 2026
BAISHAKH 26, 1433 BS
S2

The silent sacrifices BEHIND THE WHITE COAT



ILLUSTRATION: ADRIN SARWAR

Behind every late-night emergency call and every life saved in the ICU, there is a quiet reality often overlooked: the home life of the physician. For children of doctors, the “white coat” isn’t just a symbol of prestige; it is a schedule-shifter, a source of both immense pride and lingering anxiety.

ADRIN SARWAR

For many of these children, the concept of a “normal” 9-to-5 parent didn’t exist. Instead, they were “trained” from infancy to handle the sudden absence of a mother or father.

“My mom used to go on duty very early in the morning. I gradually got used to it,” says Tabassum Reza Dewan, now a doctor herself. “I was trained for that from a very early age. I understood that she was doing something very important. That’s why I

convinced myself that her leaving in the morning was more important than her staying home.”

Saima Ahmed Joya, an architect, shares a similar sentiment of mental preparation. “Actually, my mother managed everything very beautifully, we were mentally prepared that she had to go for such emergency work. Knowing my mother was involved in something so good, helping people, made us feel proud from childhood.”

However, this preparation didn’t always mask the sting of a parent’s absence. For Abrar Ahmed, a Computer Science student at IUB, the earliest memories are colored by the heartbreak of separation. “My mom would take me to class, and she would be with me for some while and then leave for work. I cried whenever she left.”

THE SIREN AND THE SACRIFICE

The pager or the ambulance siren often stole precious family time. Children of doctors often struggled with the feeling of sharing their parents with the world. Abrar notes candidly that “When my mother would work night shifts during my childhood, it made me feel like the patients were more important than me.”

Tabassum recalls the visceral fear associated with the job. “Sometimes I used to be scared when she’d go on night shifts, an ambulance with a siren would come to

pick her up. Seeing the ambulance and her leaving at night made me feel afraid for her.” Even when the parents returned, the hospital followed them home. “When she’d return with an anxious face, I’d be scared,” Tabassum remembers.

HOW DOES A DOCTOR-PARENT MANAGE?

From grandmothers to nannies, the “extended” family is what kept the household running. “Our grandmother would come stay with us, or we went to my aunt’s house,” says Saima. Tabassum adds that her grandmother was her primary caregiver. For Abrar, it was the househelps who filled the gaps, though he notes he didn’t feel lonely because other family members were present to take care of me.

PRIDE OVERCOMES ALL

Despite the missed moments, a deep sense of awe prevails. Abrar reflects, “I feel proud and so happy for everything she has accomplished. I feel relieved that all those sacrifices paid off.” Saima echoes this gratitude, noting, “Knowing my mother was involved in something so good, helping people made us feel proud from childhood. We never felt bad about her leaving. She balanced things so perfectly.” Ultimately, life as a doctor’s child is a lesson in empathy, the realisation that a missed bedtime story often means a better ending for someone else’s life.

Raising an emotionally intelligent child

ADRIN SARWAR

In our culture, the “good child” is often the one who is quiet, obedient, and follows instructions without a fuss. We see a child sitting still and think, “What a wonderful job the parents did!” But according to psychological counsellor Sabrina Islam Setu of PHWC, we might be looking at the wrong metrics.

“True emotional health is not about silence or obedience,” says Setu. “It is about emotional awareness, the ability of a child to understand and express what they feel inside.” For many parents, particularly those in high-stress professions like medicine, the challenge isn’t just about teaching good behavior. It’s about building an emotional bridge that remains even when work calls them away.

DIFFERENT STAGES OF FEELING

Emotional awareness looks different as a child grows. According to Setu, the role of a parent, particularly the mother, must evolve with the child’s development:

DE-FROCKING

“The main difficulty is not a lack of love,” Setu explains. It’s staying in ‘hospital mode.’ At home, children don’t need correction or evaluation; they need



ILLUSTRATION: ADRIN SARWAR

warmth and presence. Setu suggests a process of “de-frocking.” This is a mental “role-switch” that happens before walking through the door. A simple moment of silence and a conscious reminder, “At work I solve problems, but at home I connect.”

CONSISTENCY OVER PRESENCE

A common guilt among medical professionals is the “emergency call” that pulls them away from dinner or bedtime.

- » **EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-4 YEARS):** They need parents to help them label feelings.
- » **THE SCHOOL YEARS (5-7 YEARS):** A mother’s listening ear teaches them that sharing is safe.
- » **PRE-TEEN (8-12 YEARS):** Focus on being “emotionally available.”
- » **THE TEENAGE YEARS:** The child needs a safe harbor, not a commanding officer.

Many worry their child will feel “second-best” to a patient. However, Setu reassures parents that emotional connection is built through reliability, not just physical hours spent together. “What protects a child emotionally is repair,” she says. When you return, acknowledge the absence with honesty.

VALIDATION FIRST

Perhaps the most transformative tool

in a parent’s arsenal is the “Validation First” rule. Most children don’t misbehave because they are “naughty,” but because they are overwhelmed. “Before correcting behavior, recognise the emotion,” Setu advises. If a child refuses to share a toy, don’t start with a lecture on selfishness. Start by saying, “I can see you’re upset and don’t want to share right now.”

Raising an emotional child in a fast-paced world is a marathon, not a sprint. Whether it is explaining a late night at the hospital or navigating a toddler’s tantrum, the core remains the same: making the child feel understood.



MOTHERS in MEDICINE

The Daily Star
DHAKA SATURDAY
MAY 9, 2026
BAISHAKH 26, 1433 BS
S3

Leadership ROOTED IN COMPASSION

In the high-stakes world of healthcare, leadership requires more than administrative precision; it demands a deep-rooted heart for service. Ardra Kurien, the Chief Executive Officer of Unico Hospitals, exemplifies this balance. A visionary leader who moved from Kerala to Bangladesh to build an institution from the ground up, Kurien draws her greatest strengths from motherhood.

The Daily Star (TDS): Looking back at your journey, what specific moment made you realise you were building something truly meaningful?

Ardra Kurien (AK): My perspective changed profoundly in 2011 when I was involved in establishing a cancer centre. A patient told me that, although they lived with constant physical pain and discomfort, the suffering seemed to ease the moment they walked through our hospital doors. They felt our receptionist did not merely see them as a patient, but treated them like family, asking after relatives with genuine care. That was the first time I saw a place where human warmth could soften even the most severe suffering.

TDS: How would you define leadership in your own words?

AK: I have always considered myself a servant leader. For me, leadership is never about sitting comfortably behind a desk or issuing orders from a distance. True leadership is about creating a culture in which my team feels



ARDRA KURIEN

Chief Executive Officer
Unico Hospitals

Motherhood gave me the serenity to accept what I cannot change, the courage to change what I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

empowered to take the same initiatives I would. I firmly believe I can do nothing alone; only when the entire team moves forward together do we make an impact.

TDS: As a mother and a CEO, you carry two powerful identities. What has motherhood taught you that has made you a stronger leader?

AK: Raising my daughters has been my greatest education. It made me realise that children are not simply a reflection of their parents; they have their own thoughts and ideals. Motherhood gave me the serenity to accept what I cannot change, the courage to change what I can, and the wisdom to recognise the difference. That perspective helps me lead with patience and a deeper understanding of different viewpoints.

TDS: In moments of extreme pressure, what helps you stay steady, focused, and forward-looking?

AK: In healthcare, no two days are ever the same. Each morning brings fresh challenges and unexpected hurdles. I have learnt that even if the previous day was exhausting, the next day demands new energy and motivation. I believe in restarting every morning with a clear mind and a clean slate.

TDS: What mindset do you believe women leaders need to thrive in the

healthcare industry?

AK: To thrive in healthcare, the most basic requirement is empathy; you must love people. Building human relationships and understanding different perspectives is essential. For women who want to grow in this sector, I suggest a mindset of stretching yourself in every possible way. That means being ready to give extra hours to service while continuing to develop your professional knowledge.

TDS: Was there a time when you had to make a bold decision that others doubted, but you trusted your instinct?

AK: Choosing to come to Bangladesh to lead Unico Hospitals was that moment. I was originally from Kerala, where I was in a comfortable position at a prestigious institution. When my management asked me to take up this challenge, I decided to come here alone. Many people doubted my choice and suggested I look for easier options elsewhere. But my dedication, and seeing the hospital fully operational today, is proof that trusting my instincts was the right decision.

TDS: For young women who dream of leading in healthcare while building a family, what would you say about self-belief?

AK: While family is undoubtedly important, your own aspirations matter just as much. I always advise young women to keep chasing what their heart truly desires. Self-esteem and determination are the tools that help you achieve your dreams. You do not have to choose one over the other; you can absolutely balance a rewarding career and a fulfilling family life without sacrificing your identity.

TDS: How has your definition of success changed through the years as a woman, mother, and leader?

AK: Early in my career, I measured success by my title and how quickly I moved into higher positions. Over time, that definition has matured. Today, success means being able to spend quality time with my family while also being someone people turn to for hope. At the end of each day, if I feel I gave my hundred per cent, regardless of how difficult the day was, I feel successful. True success lies in being happy with yourself and ensuring your loved ones are content.

Interview conducted by Samia Chowdhury






MOTHERS in MEDICINE

The Daily Star
DHAKA SATURDAY
MAY 9, 2026
BAISHAKH 26, 1433 BS
S4

Motherhood nurturing success in Hematology



DR MAFRUHA AKTER
MBBS (Dhaka), FCPS (Hematology)
Associate Professor
Department of Hematology
Dhaka Medical College Hospital

Motherhood shaped my empathy and drive. Managing both roles helps me understand cases intensely, especially when treating children who look to us for hope."

In the precise field of hematology, Dr Mafruha Akter demonstrates that maternal instincts are a catalyst for clinical excellence. As an Associate Professor at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), she manages complex blood disorders while nurturing a fulfilling family life. Her journey, marked by international training and extensive research, highlights the resilience required to lead in medicine. By blending academic rigour with the empathy gained through motherhood, Dr Mafruha serves as a beacon for the next generation of female physicians.

The Daily Star (TDS): What initially drew you to hematology, and how has your mission evolved since becoming a mother?

Mafruha Akter (MA): My father inspired my medical aspirations, but I chose hematology because it uniquely combines medicine, patient interaction, and laboratory research. It is a fast-growing field essential for treating blood cancers. My career in this specialty ran parallel to my journey into motherhood. During my post-graduation and specialised bone marrow transplant training in the USA and Thailand, I had to leave my children behind. This demanding period taught me the true meaning of balance and resilience, shaping me into a more compassionate professional. I realised that the strength required to lead a department is often found in the sacrifices made at home.

TDS: How has motherhood changed your

communication with patients?

MA: Motherhood profoundly shaped my empathy. Managing both roles simultaneously allows me to understand a patient's situation more intensely. When I treat children, my own maternal experiences help me connect with them and their families on a deeper level. I do not just see a clinical case; I see a family seeking hope. This bond allows me to provide care that is both scientifically sound and emotionally supportive.

TDS: How do you manage the transition between the clinical environment and home?

MA: Compartmentalisation is my primary strategy. When I am at the hospital or the college, my focus is entirely on my patients, research, and students. Once I am home, I dedicate myself fully to my family. While the lines occasionally blur during emergencies, I strive to give each sphere the attention it deserves. My children have adapted well, and we have established a routine that protects our precious family time. My husband and parents have been my pillars, allowing me to excel in both roles.

TDS: As a woman leader, how are you working to improve healthcare standards?




MA: Beyond clinical work, I am an academician with over thirty publications in international journals. For Bangladesh, expanding research is vital to strengthening our healthcare infrastructure. I also aim to empower my female students. I want them to realise they do not have to sacrifice their professional dreams for their personal lives. With women now making up the vast majority of medical students, they are clearly the future of our nation's health.

TDS: What is the personal philosophy that keeps you motivated?

MA: I believe life is like sitting on a beach; the waves will constantly come and go. It will never be perfectly smooth, so we must find our own rhythm. My core philosophy is to approach every challenge with a cool head. Acceptance of life's unpredictability allows me to remain easy-going and focused.

Interview conducted by **Samia Chowdhury**

Acceptance keeps her practice steady



DR SHAHIDA ALAM
MBBS, FCPS (Radiotherapy)
Professor
Department of Radiation
Oncology
National Institute of Cancer
Research and Hospital

Motherhood taught me the patience needed to navigate clinical crises and the sympathy to treat every patient with the same care I give my children.

Balancing the intricacies of radiation oncology with the demands of motherhood requires a unique form of resilience. Dr Shahida Alam, a Professor at the National Institute of Cancer Research & Hospital (NICRH), has spent her career refining this challenge. Initially drawn to the field for its promise of work-life stability, she soon discovered that the patience cultivated at home became her greatest clinical asset.

The Daily Star (TDS): What initially drew you to Radiation Oncology as your specialty?

Dr Shahida Alam (SA): I chose this subject early in my career primarily because it offered a more manageable schedule than other high-pressure specialisations. At the time, I sought a peaceful balance between a burgeoning medical career and a stable family life. However, this path became one of constant evolution. I have climbed the professional ladder while maintaining my home, upgrading myself every year as a physician, a mother, and a human being. Growth in oncology is frequent, and I have embraced every change with a commitment to both my patients and my children.

TDS: How has motherhood influenced your patient care?

SA: Raising children requires immense patience, a quality that helps me navigate complex clinical scenarios. The practice of managing daily tasks and taking critical decisions during household crises has proven invaluable in a hospital setting. Motherhood

encouraged me to view my institution as a family, allowing me to look beyond mere professionalism. I treat my patients with the same protective sympathy I give my own children, fostering a bond that transcends the clinical environment. This maternal instinct provides a sense of comfort that is vital for those undergoing difficult cancer treatments.

TDS: How do you manage the pressure of such a demanding career?

SA: A smooth balance is not always achievable, and there are certainly moments of frustration or exhaustion. I believe acceptance is the key to mental health. You must make peace with the fact that you cannot be at the top of every game simultaneously. What matters is giving your absolute best effort in the moment. When the weight of treating critically ill patients feels heavy, I restore my peace through music, reading, and self-care. Without this inner stability, I cannot keep my surroundings functioning and happy.

TDS: What improvements are you bringing to cancer care at NICRH?

SA: As a professor, I focus on policy-making and empowering the next generation of trainees. At NICRH, we are working to align with global standards



by creating homogeneous treatment guidelines. These ensure all physicians follow a basic guidebook while personalising care through their own unique experience. My specific focus on breast cancer allows me to treat patients more profoundly through continuous, updated learning and research. We also arrange regular seminars and discussion sessions to cultivate a better, more efficient pathway for cancer care in Bangladesh.

TDS: What personal belief keeps you motivated?

SA: I wake up every morning knowing I have an unwavering purpose to serve now. I focus on taking one new step forward each day. I practice acceptance daily, as it lessens inner chaos and prevents despair.

Interview conducted by **Samia Chowdhury**



MOTHERS in MEDICINE

The Daily Star
DHAKA SATURDAY
MAY 9, 2026
BAISHAKH 26, 1433 BS
S5

Leading pharmaceuticals through responsibility

In the demanding world of pharmaceuticals, Razia Sharif Jhony, Deputy Managing Director of Sharif Pharmaceuticals Limited, proves that leadership is less about titles and more about care. Stepping into her role during a family crisis in 2021, she transformed a personal challenge into a period of unprecedented market growth. For Razia, the boardroom and the home share a common language: nurturing. By viewing her organisation as a child that requires constant devotion, she seamlessly harmonises her dual identities as a dedicated mother and a resilient corporate leader.

The Daily Star (TDS): Looking back, what specific moment made you feel you were building something truly meaningful?

Razia Sharif Jhony (RSJ): My journey began in 2021 when my father's illness required me to take charge of the company. Since then, we have achieved significant sales growth. I even received an award for my contributions to women's healthcare. However, the most meaningful moments occur when my parents and team trust my decisions. Working alongside them for our collective success makes me feel I have made a real impact on our society and industry.

TDS: How would you define leadership in your own words?

RSJ: I don't believe leadership is solely about giving directions. I believe in working actively across all areas of the organisation. I maintain close correspondence with my employees so that our work feels organic and collaborative. We succeed together because we operate



as a cohesive unit.

TDS: What has motherhood taught you that made you a stronger leader?

RSJ: Motherhood teaches responsibility. When you become a mother, the duty of care for your child naturally rests on your shoulders. That sense of duty transitioned into my leadership style. I view the company as one of my children. I

must nurture it with patience; only then will I see positive results. This mindset guides every professional step I take for the firm.

TDS: What is a challenge in balancing family and professional life?

RSJ: The greatest challenge is the act of balancing itself. Life throws challenges from multiple directions simultaneously. During those times, remaining calm while fulfilling all your roles is extremely difficult. It requires immense mental fortitude to stay steady and focused on what matters most.

TDS: In moments of pressure, what helps you stay steady?

RSJ: My family and the senior workers at my company are my pillars of strength. Their suggestions and support help me move forward boldly with confidence. They provide the clarity I need to lead effectively through any crisis.

TDS: Was there a time when you had to make a bold decision that others doubted at first, but you trusted your instinct and followed through?

RSJ: In business, risky decisions are common. I have taken many bold steps for growth. Sometimes outcomes are good, sometimes difficult, but I have learned to stand tall by my decisions and navigate every situation wisely to ensure success.

TDS: For young women who dream of leading organisations while also building a family life, what would you say about patience, resilience, and self-belief?

RSJ: My father says: "The bigger the tree, the stronger the wind it faces. If you can withstand that wind, you are a true businessperson." I encourage young women to learn the weight of responsibility and stay determined to achieve their goals.

TDS: What does success mean to you today?

RSJ: Success means providing guidance to my children and being there for my parents. As a leader, it means solving problems and cooperating with my team. Ultimately, success lies in functioning across all spheres of life while maintaining a healthy balance.

Interview conducted by Samia Chowdhury



**RAZIA SHARIF
JHONY**

Deputy Managing Director
Sharif Pharmaceuticals
Limited

My father says, "The bigger the tree, the stronger the wind it faces." If you can withstand and control that wind, you are a true businessperson. For young women I would like to say that, learn to take responsibility and be determined for your dreams.



Happy
Mother's
Day

"A sincere tribute to all mothers."



SHARIF PHARMACEUTICALS LTD.
(A member of Sharif Group)



MOTHERS in MEDICINE

The Daily Star
DHAKA SATURDAY
MAY 9, 2026
BAISHAKH 26, 1433 BS
S6

Fierce empathy powering medial frontiers

SAMIA CHOWDHURY

Mother's Day offers a meaningful moment to celebrate the women whose compassion, resilience, and quiet strength shape families, communities, and even the future of healthcare. Through the stories of these three doctors, we highlight how motherhood deepens empathy, strengthens purpose, and inspires excellence in demanding medical careers.



DR SADIA SHARMIN

MBBS, FCPS (Radiotherapy)
Associate Professor,
Department of Clinical
Oncology, Bangladesh
Medical University (BMU)

My FCPS journey remains my most profound experience. I failed my first attempt and was pregnant during my second. It was physically and mentally draining, and I had little hope of succeeding. However, I passed. That moment proved that the unique strength gained through motherhood can push a woman through the most difficult professional hurdles.

Resilience forged in Oncology

Dr Sadia Sharmin, exemplifies how medical precision and maternal instincts intertwine. For her, the path to becoming a specialist was inextricably linked with her transition into motherhood, with both roles demanding profound resilience.

The Daily Star (TDS): What initially inspired your career in oncology?

Dr Sadia Sharmin (SS): I originally intended to pursue paediatrics, but my professor convinced me that oncology was an emerging field with crucial work to be done. My journey as a specialist began alongside my journey into motherhood; I have grown professionally and personally in tandem ever since.

TDS: How has being a mother influenced the way you care for patients?

SS: It has deepened my empathy. In oncology, we face life-and-death situations daily. I no longer see just a medical case; I see a person with a family. When treating a child, I cannot help but think of my own children, which makes me more compassionate and driven to provide the best possible care.

TDS: Has motherhood changed the way you lead, teach, or mentor young doctors and students in your department?

SS: I mostly work with breast cancer and cervical cancer. I remember a young patient, around 25 weeks pregnant, with rectal cancer. While discussing treatment options the patient didn't prioritize her treatment, rather wanted her baby to be born healthy first. My experience of motherhood helped me understand her perspective. Also a sense of resilience has developed in me while raising my children, it has helped navigate multidimensional situations in my workplace too.

Radiating love through precision

Dr. Jannatul Ferdouse's entry into oncology was born from a father's heartfelt wish. Today, as a leading oncologist at Ahsania Mission Cancer and General Hospital, she balances the precision of radiotherapy with the nurturing soul of a mother.

The Daily Star (TDS): What initially drew you to the field of Oncology?

Dr Jannatul Ferdouse (JF): My father was diagnosed with stomach cancer during my internship. At that time, Bangladesh faced a severe shortage of oncologists. While undergoing chemotherapy, my father held my hand and said, "Ma, don't go into paediatrics; go into oncology. If you can help others, that will be a blessing for me." His words became my ultimate inspiration to pursue this high-precision field.

TDS: How has being a mother helped you navigate challenging patient cases?

JF: I once treated a 13-year-old girl with nasopharyngeal carcinoma. I navigated her moody phases with the softness and love I give my own children. After she recovered, she told a donor NGO, "If you see my doctor, half your illness is cured; she was like a mother." That reference eventually helped many other paediatric



DR JANNATUL FERDAUSE

MBBS, FCPS
(Radiotherapy), ESMO
certified
Associate Consultant
Radiation Oncology,
Ahsania Mission Cancer
and General Hospital
(AMCGH)

I remember, while my father was undergoing chemotherapy, he held my hand and said, "Ma, go into oncology. If you can help other cancer patients, that will be a blessing for me."

cancer patients receive rehabilitation and support.

TDS: How do female physicians uniquely contribute to the nation's health?

JF: Since over 50% of our population is female, having female oncologists is vital. Patients feel significantly more comfortable sharing symptoms of breast or cervical cancer with a woman. This comfort leads to earlier diagnoses and, ultimately, saves more lives.

TDS: What keeps you motivated on your heaviest days?

JF: Initially, losing patients was suffocating. However, the cordial relationships I develop with families keep me steady. The trust they place in us and their words of blessings are the sweet gestures that keep me moving forward.



PROFESSOR DR NAZNEEN MAHMOOD

MBBS, MD (Nephrology),
FRCP(Edin, UK),
CCD(BIRDEM)
Professor and Head of
Nephrology, Anwer Khan
Modern Medical College
and Hospital



Treat every patient like family. If you don't have that emotional connection, you cannot truly heal.

Elevating spirits in Nephrology

In the intricate field of nephrology, Professor Dr Nazneen Mahmood stands as a pioneer. As Professor and Head of Nephrology at Anwer Khan Modern Medical College, she reflects on a journey that began when female specialists were rare. Balancing rigorous postgraduate studies with raising two children, she mastered the art of multitasking.

The Daily Star (TDS): What exactly drew you to nephrology?

Prof Dr Nazneen Mahmood (NM): In 2002, kidney diseases were rising, yet female nephrologists were nearly non-existent. I saw a gap and a responsibility to serve. Pursuing a speciality with so few women required immense courage and clear vision.

TDS: How did you balance your postgraduate training with motherhood?

NM: It was incredibly challenging. I had two young children during my studies. I moved house to be near relatives for support and leave my children with help to manage shifts. This struggle taught me resilience and the necessity of a support system. Today, seeing my children excel as an engineer and another studying architecture, is my greatest professional reward.

TDS: How does motherhood influence your own clinical practice?

NM: Motherhood brings a level of patience and empathy that is essential in healthcare. I treat my patients like my own family. If you don't have that emotional connection, you cannot truly heal. I often help underprivileged patients beyond medical advice because a leader must care for the person, not just the specific illness.

TDS: Your final advice to young women going to navigate various stages of their life?

NM: Never give up. I tell my students to dream "up to the sky." Dedication will help you navigate the winds. Every morning I wake up with the mindset that I have a purpose to serve the whole wide world.



MOTHERS in MEDICINE

The Daily Star
DHAKA SATURDAY
MAY 9, 2026
BAISHAKH 26, 1433 BS
S7

A mother's STRENGTH IN CARDIOLOGY

In the demanding world of interventional cardiology, Dr Tunaggina Afrin Khan, a Consultant at Unico Hospitals, bridges a high-stakes environment with motherhood. With seventeen years of experience, she believes empathy and multitasking skills honed at home have made her a more effective clinician. Discover how maternal instincts drive medical excellence, innovation, and care.

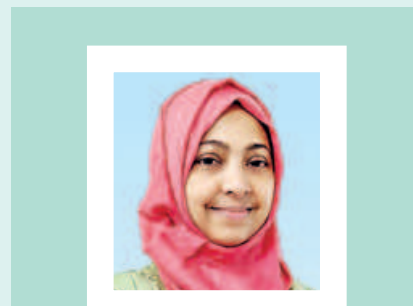
The Daily Star (TDS): What drew you to Cardiology, and how has your mission evolved since becoming a mother?

Tunaggina Afrin Khan (TAK): I always aspired to be a physician. When I completed my MBBS, interventional cardiology was advancing rapidly. The ability to take life-saving action felt thrilling. Motherhood gifted me multitasking skills and empathy towards my patients. Whether navigating chaos in the health sector or handling tough clinical circumstances, I have matured into a more resilient professional. Raising children has taught me that patience and perspective are vital in medical care.

TDS: How has motherhood changed the way you communicate regarding diagnoses?

TAK: Managing my children's needs while balancing professional pressures has given me a unique perspective. These experiences allow me to understand people's fears better. When I speak to a family now, I am not just a doctor; I am someone who understands the weight of responsibility and the depth of emotional concern and worry.

T D S :
Cardiology



**DR TUNAGGINA AFRIN
KHAN**

MBBS, MD (Cardiology), FAPSC, FSCAI
Consultant
Clinical & Interventional Cardiology
Unico Hospitals

Motherhood gave me the ability to multitask and made me more empathetic. It granted me the serenity to handle difficult clinical situations with maturity and grace.

requires focus. What is your strategy for transitioning from hospital to "Mom"?

TAK: It is entirely about mindset. This practice has been refined over seventeen years into an internal pattern. I eventually understood that despite being busy professionally, I must leave my titles at the door when I reach home. My children deserve the very best of my available time. I strive to be fully present and supportive for them. This transition is essential for always maintaining a healthy balance between my two most vital roles.

TDS: Can you share an instance where maternal strength helped navigate a professional crisis?

TAK: Early in my career, a young patient suffered a heart attack. After the consultation, his wife wept, sharing that she had young daughters and no relatives to help. As a

mother, I felt her terror. That night, I challenged myself: "What did I miss?" That emotional connection pushed me to think outside the box. I discovered an additional diagnosis requiring immediate attention. Feeling that woman's pain as a mother gave me the drive to look deeper and save a life. This experience remains a defining moment. Empathy is a powerful clinical tool leading to better patient outcomes. Empathy drives me to be a better doctor.

TDS: How do you handle "mom guilt" during late-night emergencies?

TAK: I believe guilt stems from a desire to control everything. My coping mechanism reflects the understanding that not everything is within my hands. I have taught my family to adapt to the demands of my profession. It must be a two-way support system where we navigate challenges together. This mutual understanding eases the burden, allowing me to focus on my patients.

TDS: How do female physicians contribute uniquely to the nation's health?

TAK: Their contribution is immense. In our conservative society, many women felt uncomfortable with male cardiologists, often waiting until their condition became grave. Female cardiologists are bridging this gap, excelling in both imaging and complex interventions. They provide a sense of comfort that encourages more women to seek help, ultimately improving the overall health of our nation's female population.

TDS: Who is the biggest supporter behind your success?

TAK: It is an entire system—my parents, sisters, husband, and especially my children. Even on my most exhausting days, my kids encourage me, saying, "Mom, you'll rock. Finish the day." Their belief in me is my most powerful strength, providing the motivation I need to excel in both roles.

TDS: What philosophy keeps you motivated when worlds feel heavy?

TAK: I tell myself I must get through without losing myself. I cannot stop because people need me and love me. I still have so much to give to society. It is about finding the strength to carry on.

Interview conducted by Samia Chowdhury





ইউনিভার্সেল মেডিকেল কলেজ হাসপাতাল, ঢাকা- আয়োজিত বিশ্ব মা দিবসে বিশেষ সম্মাননার ১৩ তম বর্ষের আয়োজন গরবিনী মা-২০২৬



প্রধান অতিথি

অধ্যাপক ডা. এ জেড এম জাহিদ হোসেন, এমপি
মাননীয় মন্ত্রী
সমাজকল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয় এবং মহিলা ও শিশু বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বিশেষ অতিথি

ইঞ্জিনিয়ার আশরাফ উদ্দিন বকুল
মাননীয় সংসদ সদস্য
নরসিংদী-৫ (রায়পুরা)
বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় সংসদ

সভাপতি

প্রীতি চক্রবর্তী
চেয়ারম্যান
ইউনিভার্সেল মেডিকেল কলেজ হাসপাতাল, ঢাকা
সিনিয়র সহ-সভাপতি, বাংলাদেশ চেম্বার অব ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ

জনাবা বেগম ফরহাত ইসলাম



সভান (প্রশাসন)

মোঃ ফাহিমুল ইসলাম
সচিব, রেলপথ মন্ত্রণালয়
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

জনাবা বেগম রোকেয়া রশীদ



সভান (আইন ও বিচার)

মোহাঃ রকিবুল ইসলাম
(সিনিয়র জেলা ও দায়রা জজ),
বিচারক; নারী ও শিশু নির্যাতন দমন
ট্রাইব্যুনাল, বরিশাল

জনাবা মোসাঃ রাজিফা আজাদ



সভান (আইন-শুধা)

মো. শফিকুল ইসলাম (ডিআইজি)
অতিরিক্ত কমিশনার
গোয়েন্দা শাখা (ডিবি) প্রধান
ঢাকা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ

জনাবা সেলিমা হক



সভান (শিক্ষা)

ড. তানিয়া হক
অধ্যাপক
উইম্যান এন্ড জেন্ডার স্টাডিজ
ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

জনাবা রাজিয়া আহমেদ



সভান (সাংবাদিকতা)

এ.কে.এম. মনজুরুল ইসলাম
নির্বাহী সম্পাদক
দৈনিক বাংলাদেশ প্রতিদিন

শ্রীমতী সরস্বতী প্রসাদ



সভান (চিকিৎসা)

অধ্যাপক ডাঃ ইন্দ্রজিৎ প্রসাদ
বিভাগীয় প্রধান (এন্ডোক্রাইনোলজি)
ঢাকা মেডিকেল কলেজ ও হাসপাতাল

শ্রীমতী ফাল্গুনী কুন্ডু



সভান (প্রকৌশল)

অমিতি কুন্ডু
স্থপতি, শিল্পক ও
ডিজাইন পেশাজীবী

জনাবা সায়মা মনির মিনু



সভান (সংগীত)

সোমনূর মনির কোনাল
জাতীয় চলচ্চিত্র পুরস্কারপ্রাপ্ত
নন্দিত সঙ্গীতশিল্পী

জনাবা ফাতেমা আক্তার কাজল



সভান (অভিনয়- পুরুষ)

জিয়াউল হক পলাশ
নন্দিত নাট্য অভিনেতা,
মডেল ও পরিচালক

জনাবা সৈয়দা শারমিন



সভান (অভিনয়- নারী)

তাসনিয়া ফারিণ
নন্দিত অভিনেত্রী
সংগীত শিল্পী ও মডেল

জনাবা শিরিন আক্তার (পিয়া)



সভান (অদম্য মেধাবী)

খাইরুম ইসলাম
প্রথম আলো ট্রাস্ট
অদম্য মেধাবী

প্রধান উদ্যোক্তা

ডাঃ আশীষ কুমার চক্রবর্তী

প্রধান উদ্যোক্তা- গরবিনী মা সম্মাননা
ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক
ইউনিভার্সেল মেডিকেল কলেজ হাসপাতাল
মহাখালী, ঢাকা
ইউনিভার্সেল মেডিকেল সার্ভিসেস লিঃ
ব্রাহ্মণবাড়িয়া এবং
প্রধান উদ্যোক্তা-
আশুতোষ চক্রবর্তী স্মারক শিক্ষাবৃত্তি
সরাইল, ব্রাহ্মণবাড়িয়া

হেলথলাইন
১০৬৬৭