

Shakardokht JAFARI

Home Country	Afghanistan
Degree	PhD in Physics
Expertise	Medical Physics
Research Focus	Radiation Dosimetry
Host University	University of Surrey, United Kingdom
Fellowship Awarded	2013

Shakardokht Jafari was born in Daikondi province, Afghanistan, in 1977. Her father - a teacher - taught lessons in their home because there was no school in their village. When Shakardokht was six, the family left Afghanistan due to intense fighting and insecurity. She attended primary school in Tehran, Iran and, despite family objections, managed to cancel an arranged marriage and complete her high school studies.

Shakardokht entered Tehran Medical University in 1996 to study Radiology. By that time her father had changed his mind and decided to support her, however as he had six children he could not afford much and she faced financial hardship. However, after one semester, a UNHCR DAFI refugee scholarship enabled her continue her education. Shakardokht graduated with a BSc in Radiology from Tabriz Medical University, Iran, in 2000 with the highest honors in her class. She then worked for three years as a radiation technologist in Tabriz before returning to Afghanistan as an assistant lecturer at Kabul Medical University (KMU).

Afghanistan has high rates of cancer. According to a WHO report, Gastro-oesophageal, lung, breast, colo-rectal cancer and cervical cancers are occurring with increasing frequency. The country has no cancer treatment facilities, and with international support, KMU plans to establish its first Radiation Oncology center. Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy (SBRT) is a complex treatment that presents medical physicists with several challenges. Shakardokht's PhD research project entitled "Optimization of Dosimetry in the SBRT Technique" will help her become familiar with the scientific challenges of clinical radiotherapy and learn how to deal with them.

Upon completion of her PhD, Shakardokht plans to return to teach and perform research at KMU. She hopes to establish a postgraduate medical physics course to help students who cannot afford to go abroad for completion of their studies.