In Memoriam of Jeanne P.M.R. Winaktu, M.D.,
March 20, 1955 to April 2, 2020

The International Neurosurgical Community was deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. A considerable number of neurosurgeons have died. This memorial is intended to commemorate our female Colleague Dr. Winaktu who died on April 2, 2020.

Jeanne P.M.R. Winaktu was born in Jakarta on March 20, 1955. She attended junior and senior high school in Jakarta from 1966–1969 and from 1969–1972, respectively. She studied Medicine at the University Medical School of Indonesia and graduated in 1980. Her medical education included General Surgery, Plastic Surgery, and Sports Medicine (1985). After graduation, she attended courses in English and Medical Acupuncture while she perfected herself in General Surgery. She joined the Indonesian Navy Force (Figure 1) and received a scholarship in 1987 to attend the neurosurgical training program at the University of Indonesia/CiptoMangunkusumo Hospital in Jakarta, where she completed her neurosurgical training in 1996.

In addition to being a neurosurgeon, Dr. Winaktu also received a master's degree in Marine Medicine in 2009. In the 1980s, she also attended a great deal of training, courses and workshops, both domestically and abroad. In 2000, she attended Advanced Courses in Trauma Management and, in 2001, she joined a Workshop on cadaver dissection for skull base surgery. In 2010 in Tangerang she attended a hands-on Course on Minimally Invasive and Endoscopic Neurosurgery, and in the same year in Jakarta she attended a hands-on cadaver dissection for cervical and lumbar instrumentation.

She was the first female neurosurgeon in Indonesia and spent a lot of energy helping younger female neurosurgeons to reach their positions; in her mind, the world of neurosurgery should recognize the importance of emancipation and how a female neurosurgeon can improve patients' care with a gentle touch. Her medical training went hand-in-hand with her military training in a career that she had chosen and to which she devoted herself entirely (Figure 2).

She was very active in Navy Health Service and became the Director of the Indonesian Navy Hospital (RSAL) in Jakarta, as well as in Surabaya, and was also former Head of the Indonesian Navy's Health Service (DISHNASAL) in 2012. She was the second of the only 2 Indonesian women who reached the rank of High Officer (Commodore) in the Indonesian Navy (Figure 3). During her military career, she received at least 5 medals of honor from various institutions, including the Indonesian Government.

Jeanne was a person who did not like audiences: she loved doing more than appearing, and all those who were lucky enough to know her and spend more time with her rather than a fleeting contact at scientific events agreed in defining her as an extraordinary woman.

Jeanne never married or had children, but she had 2 large families to whom she dedicated herself completely, the Navy and Neurosurgery. In both environments she left her mark, her brand, and at the time of her unexpected death due to COVID-19 on April 2, 2020, she was remembered with great emotion throughout her country by colleagues, friends, and patients.

We believe it is fair to remember her through the words of those who had the chance and fortune to know her better.

First Dr. Asra Al Fauzi, Executive Member of Neurosurgery Technology Committee of the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies (WFNS); General Secretary of ASEAN Neurosurgical Association (ASNA); and General Secretary of Indonesian Neurosurgical Society (INS), who had the chance to know and work with her. He wrote this touching memory:
She was a superb teacher, educator, and role model for young neurosurgeons. She spent her entire life on education, and she donated her lifetime work to the benefits of the new generations of neurosurgeons. During difficult times due to natural disasters, she has contributed a lot to help and be involved as a team in disaster management in Indonesia. She will always be remembered as one of the “mothers of neurosurgery in Indonesia.”

Dr. Mirna Sobana, Chairwoman of Indonesian Women in Neurosurgery, wrote about her mentor and teacher Jeanne Winaktu, her personality and prestige into the Indonesian neurosurgical environment. Below we can read her moving memory:

We now have 21 women among 377 neurosurgeons in Indonesia, all gathered in Indonesian Women in Neurosurgery, but sad to say that our first pioneer has passed away on 2nd April 2020 due to Covid19 … She was a very good female soldier and a very good leader. She was the Chief Leader of National Navy Healthcare also. In my memory, she was a very kindhearted and caring Senior to me and to all younger sister neurosurgeons in Indonesia. She often called me to check out whether I was okay in every situation and she asked about other female neurosurgeons’ condition and discussed with me whether there was one of them that had an issue and tried to help to solve the problem. It’s a terrible loss for us. We really miss her and the memory of her will remain in our mind and our hearts.

Jeanne Winaktu was a pioneer in every field of her life, first woman neurosurgeon and second high Navy Officer of Indonesia (Figure 4) and devoted her entire existence to all women who after her would have looked to venture into both of these beautiful and demanding careers. Unfortunately, this terrible pandemic deprived us of many Colleagues and made the neurosurgical community, with particular reference to women in neurosurgery, an orphan of such a precious presence, custodian of memories of the past, and guide for building the future.

All female neurosurgeons are grateful to YOU, Jeanne Winaktu, for what you have done. Unfortunately, we can no longer express to you personally our gratitude, but we always remember you with grateful affection. May your soul rest in peace.

The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living (Marco Tullio Cicero, Filippiche IX,10)

Vita enim mortuorum in memoria est posita vivorum (Cicero’s Orationes, Philippicæ IX,10)

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