





The Story of the Sudanese Doctor Who Died on the UK Pandemic Frontline

55-year-old Amged El-Hawrani died on March 28, becoming one of the first doctors in Britain's NHS to succumb to the virus.

Amged El-Hawrani was one of the many doctors who went to work every day as the coronavirus took hold — even though he might be exposed — risking his own life to treat patients at a hospital in central

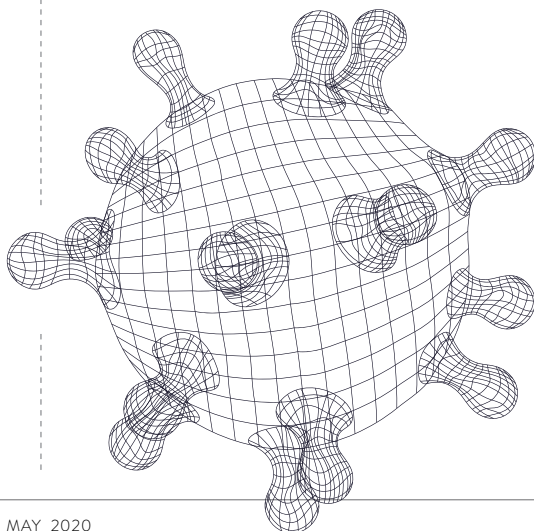
England.

The 55-year-old died on March 28, one of the first doctors in the UK's National Health Service (NHS) to succumb to COVID-19, becoming a symbol of the danger all health workers brave.



Yet in life, Amged shunned attention, and would have been embarrassed to be described as a hero, according to his youngest brother, Amal.

«He would kind of nervously laugh or punch, brush it off as people over-exaggerating,” Amal said. «He would say to you, ‘I’m just doing my job».



Amged did not see himself as extraordinary.

Born in Sudan as the second of six brothers, Amged told friends about a carefree childhood in Africa, memories of playing soccer in the family’s garden before his father, a radiologist, sought a new life for his family in the United Kingdom.

It was before the era of mass immigration to Britain, and the Hawrani brothers found they were often the only non-white children in their new neighbourhood in Taunton, Somerset, and the other areas to which they relocated.

That didn’t trouble Amged, who was 11 years old when they arrived. He considered himself as British as «tea and crumpets».

«I don’t think he looked at himself and said that I’m different than everyone else,» Amal said. «He was just a kid in a school, and he was very, very strong, very confident, and never let anything worry him or make him doubt himself. He just always persevered.»

Amged's self-assurance took him to what is now known as London Metropolitan University, where he studied science and embraced the capital's multiculturalism at a time of dramatic change in British society.

Amged made friends from all over the world. He had friends from Greece, Zimbabwe and from all corners of Asia.

He enjoyed his youth, listening to the music of Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson, and the comedy of Richard Pryor and Robin Williams together with his brother Ashraf, just 11 months older.

The brothers shared a passion for cars, too. Amged zipped around in an Alfa Romeo GT6. Years later, he would recall how the sports car smelled — something like Paco Rabanne cologne mixed with the wood of the steering wheel.

The brothers also shared a vision of medicine as a cool and noble profession. They went off together to study at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. Life in Dublin brought events of life-altering joy and sorrow.

While driving around looking for frogs to dissect, Amged and a fellow student offered a ride to two Irish sisters who had missed the last bus into town. Amged's classmate tried to strike up a conversation with Pamela Foley, but she was more intrigued by the quiet one, Amged. The pair eventually married and had a son.

Tragedy struck in 1992. Amged went to check on his brother at their mother's request when she couldn't reach her eldest son. He banged on the door of Ashraf's apartment and finally forced his way in. He found his 29-year-old brother dead from a severe asthma attack.

That left Amged as the eldest, taking on all the responsibility that came with it. Yet Amal can't recall ever hearing his older brother complain about a problem or issue.

«The opposite was true, in that we would all lean on him very heavily», Amal said.

Outside his family, work was Amged's priority.

He sought post-medical school training in London but ended up in Wales, where he would



Above:
Dr Amged
El-Hawrani

jokingly tell his brothers that he could see «sheep outside of my front window and cows outside my back window.»

Amged worked in Ireland and Canada, and became an ear, nose and throat specialist.

Eventually, he found recognition. He was a physician, a trainer and an associate clinical director.

NHS officials credited Amged with playing a key role in the merger of two hospitals that had struggled with low staff morale and retention. He brought the teams together, said Gavin Boyle, chief executive of University Hospitals of Derby and Burton.

Amged loved to travel when he wasn't caring for patients or teaching medical students at Queen's Hospital Burton, an acute care facility. He made several visits to Disney World, Florida, with Pamela and their son, Ashraf, who is named after his late uncle and is now 18.

On one Disney visit, the family saw a sign with the words «A hero is...» on it and a spot to take a picture. His wife and son tried to get Amged to pose beneath it, but he resisted. So typical.

«He did not seek the praise and approval of others. He was satisfied by viewing the positive effects of his actions and the well-being of his family», Ashraf said in a statement. «I am incredibly proud to say that for 18 years of my life, Amged El-Hawrani was my father.»

(Source: Associated Press + The Arab weekly)