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Mi Jun, our MS student (In Memoriam)

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To: "DL.WG.FSE.CIDSE.AllFaculty" <CIDSEAllFaculty@asu.edu>, cidse.advising@asu.edu

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Dear all:

I am writing to inform you, with tremendous sadness, that Mi Jun, one of our MS students, passed away yesterday night, after a nearly two-year long battle with cancer. After a minor bicycle accident fractured his hip in the summer of 2013, the doctors at Tempe St. Lukes discovered that the fracture was a result of the bone brittleness caused by an advanced stage Osteosarcoma, and referred him to Mayo clinic. As far as I can tell, Mi got state-of-the-art care at Mayo. After a lengthy chemo treatment, Mi Jun came back to school in the fall of 2014, with the cancer in remission. I remember being so very pleasantly surprised last September when Mi Jun unexpectedly walked into our group meeting all hale and healthy. Unfortunately, soon after that, his doctors found that his cancer returned and he had to go back on chemo. Earlier this semester he told me he was taking part in a UCLA clinical trial, and that he is very tired after the treatment and travel. I got a note from his girl friend this morning that he passed away yesterday night.

Mi is from China and joined our M.S. program in Fall 2012. I first met him as a student in my graduate level AI class in Fall 2012. Mi struck me as a deep thinker. He started working with me towards his MS thesis, in Spring 2013 and Summer 2013 (when he had the bicycle accident). His tentative topic was automated paraphrasing of text (which could have applications in finding semantic rather than world-level similarity between two passages). Even in the short time we worked together, I could see his ability to comprehend complex concepts in machine learning and natural language processing.

During my continued interactions with him since his diagnosis in Summer 2013, I was always impressed at his unflinching optimism. Throughout his treatment, Mi continued to be enrolled in our MS program. Last fall, even through the chaotic time of remission and relapse of his cancer, he successfully completed two courses. He registered for a course I am teaching this semester. He had only one other course to complete for his Masters degree, and remained optimistic of the future.

Sincerely
Rao

Ps: As Gloria Steinem once said, the first casualty of long-term illness is the loss of humanity of the bystanders. I would like to think that ASU did reasonably well on this count. I would like to specially thank Ron, Yann-Hang, Sandeep and Mutsumi, who gave Mi Jun light TA duties to help with his finances, Christopher Biro of CIDSE advising, Michael Crandall of ISO, and Anna Yi of registrars office (?) who helped him navigate this very difficult phase from the university/INS/Insurance perspectives. While I am no expert, I thought the treatment he got at St. Lukes and Mayo was also very first-rate; I am grateful that ASU insists on health insurance for international students.

2 attachments



mi-jun-during-remission.jpg
122K



mi-jun-during-treatment.jpg
242K