

News from



HealthyKids International receives funding from Government of India

Toronto, ON – June 9, 2009 – HealthyKids International (HKI) today announces funding for its global children’s health initiative from the Government of India which represents a major endorsement for HKI.

“HealthyKids International is extremely honoured to receive such a significant endorsement from the Government of India,” says Ruth Grant, Chair, HealthyKids International. “Their support is an important commitment and we will build on this milestone by engaging other partners from the Indo-Canadian community.”

Support from the Government of India demonstrates its commitment to and belief in HKI. It also acknowledges the importance of the partnership between India’s Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) and HKI to advance the health of India’s children through paediatric education, outreach and collaboration. The financial commitment to HKI is approximately \$120,000 (equivalent to five million rupees) over three years beginning this year.

“The Government of India is very pleased to partner with HealthyKids International,” said Mrs. Preeti Saran, Consul-General of India, based in Toronto. “This will be mutually beneficial to both India and Canada. The training received by these paediatricians at a world-renowned institution like The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) will materially advance the delivery of health care when they go back to India. Likewise, the clinical experience that these doctors bring from India would add value to the services and will benefit patients here. This initiative is an excellent example of collaboration and the great promise that is now evident in the wider India-Canada relationship.”

HKI has created a Fellowship program for physicians from India to receive training at SickKids. This program, called HKI-India, will achieve objectives specific to India within the framework of global HKI activities. In consultation with PGIMER, a need was identified at tertiary care institutions throughout the country to upgrade the clinical academic paediatric program. A secretariat for HKI-India is now based at the PGIMER. In addition, a National Advisory Council has been formed that meets regularly to provide guidance and advice to the HKI team on all matters relating to its activities in India.

“The Government of India’s support of our HKI-India program is a powerful testament to engaging the diaspora in meaningful ways,” says Kasi Rao, strategic advisor to HKI. “They have given us, beyond the significant material support, a compelling way to enhance and mobilize support from Canadians, many of whom have roots in India. We are honoured to have been selected.”

Four Fellows from India began their one-year Fellowship at SickKids on July 1, 2008. The inaugural 2008 Fellows are all junior faculty members from Bengaluru, Kolkata, Jodhpur and Chandigarh. Junior faculty members have been selected as ideal candidates because they are the teachers of medical students, residents and specialist colleagues throughout India. They set the standards for the delivery of health care. The 2009 Fellow (announced in April 2009) is from Chennai.

Fellows are carefully selected according to stringent criteria with a specific focus on doctors who are committed to returning to their home medical institutions upon completion of their Fellowships at SickKids. Upon their return to their home institutions as 'graduated' HKI Fellows, junior faculty will be in a position to enhance the teaching pool and thereby have a much greater and more sustained impact on children's health in India. The Fellows' clinical backgrounds are diverse and encompass various fields of medicine. In return, they become key ambassadors for the program and for creating a brain-chain between Canada and India in the advancement of paediatric health care.

HKI-India has brought five Fellows from India to Toronto, Canada to participate in its Fellowship training program for one year and will provide four years of in-country support when they return to India. The ongoing support totals \$80,000 per Fellow and can be used to help fund telemedicine, e-learning, online healthcare and medical resources, funding for specific local programs, collaborative research opportunities, visiting medical teams and additional training opportunities, as appropriate.

The inaugural Fellows for the 2008/9 program selected by HKI, PGIMER and other recommended, reputable institutions are from various Indian cities:

Dr. Madhavan Jagadeesan is an Ophthalmology Consultant and Research Scientist in the Department of Genetics and Molecular biology at the Vision Research Foundation (VRF) of Sankara Nethralaya in Chennai – a renowned eye hospital that services patients India-wide. According to Dr. Jagadeesan, between 60 and 70 per cent of his ocular genetic patients are children who require treatment for conditions ranging from mild cataracts to total blindness. As a result, he is inspired to research and develop strategies to further paediatric molecular diagnostic testing, in order to better understand the implications of hereditary eye disorders. Currently, he is pursuing an Ocular Genetics Fellowship offered by the Ophthalmology Department at SickKids.

Dr. Beechalli Puttaiah Karunakara is an Associate Professor at M.S. Ramaiah Medical College in Bengaluru, where he leads the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit. In addition to providing clinical care, Dr. Karunakara is responsible for training and supervising junior staff, graduate, and post-graduate students. Managing critically-ill children through the use of modern technologies, updating his mechanical ventilation, paediatric emergency, and monitoring methods and gaining expertise in research and grant writing will be the focus of Dr. Karunakara's Fellowship; he is spending his Fellowship with the critical care medicine team at SickKids.

Dr. Ashwin Mallipatna is a Consultant Ophthalmologist at Narayana Nethralaya (a state-of-the-art specialty ophthalmic institute) in Bengaluru. As a Consultant, Dr. Mallipatna has been responsible for multiple rural ventures and has been involved in the development of Tele-Ophthalmology services for Naryana Nethralaya. He is spending his HKI Fellowship in the Department of Ophthalmology at SickKids to focus primarily on retinoblastoma, the most common eye cancer in children. Gaining a more in-depth understanding of the disease and its genetic causes, the skills to work with current diagnostic tools, the knowledge to make accurate diagnoses and the experience to prescribe effective treatment for retinoblastoma is at the forefront of Dr. Mallipatna's Fellowship.

Dr. Manish Parakh currently holds the title of Assistant Professor of Paediatric Medicine at the Dr. S.N. Medical College in Jodhpur. Dr. Parakh is spending his Fellowship in the Department of Neurology and his objectives for his Fellowship include acquiring increased knowledge and skills to manage paediatric epilepsy, to perform paediatric neuro-diagnosis, and to learn about interventional neurology. Dr. Parakh is interested in gaining the skills to develop clinical facilities to create a developmental neurology program for spastic children at his home institution.

Dr. Tapas Kumar Som is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Neonatology at the Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education and Research in Kolkata. Dr. Som is spending his Fellowship working at the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Women's College site as well as with the SickKids Neonatology team. (Sunnybrook & Women's is part of the tri-hospital program in Neonatology which also includes SickKids and Mount Sinai). Dr. Som currently holds clinical, teaching and research responsibilities at his institution and feels that additional education in the management of critically-ill newborns, neonatal neurology and neonatal autopsy would be of great value to both him and his colleagues at the Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education and Research and would ultimately improve their ability to care for Kolkata's sickest infants.

About HealthyKids International

The vision of HealthyKids International (HKI), a SickKids Foundation initiative, is *Healthier Children. A Better World.*[™] To achieve this vision, HKI is addressing the shortage of paediatric specialists working in select developing countries where funding issues have traditionally created gaps in care. HKI has addressed this disparity by establishing a Fellowship program that trains physicians and surgeons from a variety of paediatric and surgical sub-specialties in advanced clinical practice at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) in Toronto, and supports them when they return home. This enables these paediatricians to provide better care for children and to develop improved healthcare systems in their home countries. HKI creates sustainable solutions to a global health crisis by addressing the shortage of highly-trained paediatric physicians, seeding permanent capacity and improving the health outcomes of the world's most vulnerable children. Visit www.healthykidsinternational.com for more information.

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