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The President's Report:

The Much Anticipated Beginning



They finally arrived! Over a year has passed since HealthyKids International was established, and we finally have our

Fellows from India training under the HealthyKids International banner in various departments at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. (You can read an interview with one of them later in this newsletter.)

Although getting our Fellows here is a huge milestone, it is just the start of our journey. We are now able to work closely with our Fellows to determine their exact training requirements and what kind of specific support they need when they return home – all without the impediment of different times zones and a glaring lack of personal familiarity.

This is an exciting time for us. It is the time to see our preliminary work come to fruition, it is the time to mold our future efforts to fit the needs of our Fellows and, ultimately, the children they care for. As we do this, we continue to work and build partnerships with NGOs around the world and relationships with visionary philanthropists who believe in our potential and understand the role this program can play in improving child health around the globe.

Kind regards,

Michael O'Mahoney
President

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HealthyKids International Rwanda:

Building our Bonds, Expanding our Partnership



Dr. Jeremy Friedman, Head of Paediatric Medicine at The Hospital for Sick Children

In early July, HealthyKids International approached Dr. Jeremy Friedman, Head of Paediatric Medicine at The Hospital for Sick Children and a native of South Africa, for his expert advice. We knew that his experience and input would be incredibly valuable, and so asked of him a pretty big favour: to travel to Rwanda on our behalf to help us further develop our program there. Luckily, he obliged, and has agreed to share his thoughts and experiences with us.

About a month ago, Michael O'Mahoney and Claudia Schauer came to my office to outline and explain the HKI program in Rwanda and the partnership with King Faisal Hospital. Because there are only 2 paediatricians at King Faisal Hospital, the hospital leadership wanted to know whether SickKids could provide coverage while Dr. Mucumbitsi, the first HKI Fellow from Rwanda, would be at SickKids receiving his specialized cardiac training. Considering that Rwanda's population of 10 million is served by less than a dozen paediatricians, it seemed a very reasonable request. HKI came to me because a general paediatrician would be needed to fill this gap. I didn't quite realize that a few weeks later I would be belted into my seat on Kenya Airways en route to Kigali to get answers to all of my questions – first-hand!

After being briefed by Dr. Geoffrey Barker and the HKI team, I sensed the tremendous commitment to this partnership in Rwanda. By providing training to Dr. Mucumbitsi, HKI wants to give him the tools to improve the care and potentially save the lives of thousands of young Rwandans with heart disease. Initially, I thought that our own trainees and staff could learn a great deal from spending time in that setting to round out this partnership, perhaps opening up the lines of communication for further clinical, teaching, and research collaborations. Nevertheless, I did need to know exactly what we would be asking of those volunteering to take this on.

I was immediately impressed by the warmth and friendliness of all those I met while spending a week at King Faisal Hospital (KFH) in Rwanda. The capital, Kigali, is a city of close to 1 million; it is vibrant, clean, and safe with lots of construction and development. It is served by 2 hospitals. One of them, KFH, serves as the specialist regional referral centre for Rwanda and has 30 paediatric beds, 4 NICU beds, and 2 paediatric beds in the ICU. Their vision is to be a centre of excellence in health services provision and clinical education in their part of Africa. The hospital's values include quality care, compassion, and accountability. The much larger public hospital, Central University Hospital of Kigali (CHUK), has about 80 paediatric beds but is a much more basic facility with very limited resources.

I spent my week accompanying the 2 paediatricians at KFH on their ward rounds and observing their clinics. I took the opportunity to spend time with some of their residents, medical officers, and students to share with them some of our management protocols for common paediatric problems, and in turn they educated me about how they managed certain conditions we don't often see here, as well as how to function without the supports we are so accustomed to at SickKids.

I quickly concluded that we could certainly ask for volunteers from our senior paediatric and neonatal trainees and general paediatric and emergency room faculty to do the job. This partnership has the potential to be mutually advantageous, as well as to open up new opportunities for collaboration and be a tremendous work and life experience for everyone involved. It was an exhausting, but very educational and interesting week, and I look forward to working with HKI and medical staff from KFH in the near future.

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HKI at Work:

A Fellow's First Impressions



Dr. Beechalli Puttaiah Karunakara, HealthyKids International Fellow

Dr. Beechalli Puttaiah Karunakara (Dr. Karunakara BP) is an Associate Professor at M.S. Ramaiah Medical College in Bangalore, 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. He began his fellowship with the critical care team at SickKids in early July.

HealthyKids International (HKI) sat down with him recently to hear about his first experiences and impressions as one of our inaugural Fellows.

HKI: What inspired you to apply for the HKI Fellowship program?

I have always been interested in critical/intensive care, but I have recognized that there is a need to improve my knowledge and skills to provide quality care to needy children with modern therapeutic measures and equipment. The lack of such an opportunity in India was a major hurdle to improving my knowledge and practical skills. I knew SickKids would be a wonderful place to pursue this training, which is why I was very happy to hear about this opportunity. I am sure I will benefit immensely from working and training at SickKids.

HKI: What were your first thoughts when you arrived in Toronto?

My actual arrival to Toronto was comfortable and easy. The Foundation team was very helpful in this regard. I have been very impressed by the way things were handled by the HealthyKids International staff. It's because of their efforts that I could arrive here in Toronto so comfortably. I am very thankful to everyone for this.

I am from Bangalore, the information capital of India (the Silicon Valley of India!), and as one of the fastest growing cities in the world with a population over 5 million, it is a very dense city. There are people everywhere! Compared to Bangalore, Toronto seems calm, beautiful, clean, and more thinly populated. I was used to a much busier schedule, traffic congestion, pollution and many other things associated with a big and thickly populated city like Bangalore. Toronto is a nice change. I am happy for this.

HKI: What were your first impressions of SickKids?

SickKids is awesome. It is a beautiful hospital; it is clean and fun. Take Main Street for instance – it's more like a shopping centre than a hospital, and all the families and kids seem happy and comfortable as they walk through that area.

SickKids also feels less crowded than the hospital I work in Bangalore. The patient load seems more manageable.

HKI: What did you do on the first day of training? During the first week?

For the first few days I took part in an orientation program – this was a very helpful introduction to the Hospital and the Critical Care department. But once that was complete, I began my actual training and started seeing patients right away. I had to start learning the new systems, protocol, processes, everything. At first, I felt a little lost, but it just takes time to adjust to the newness of the situation.

HKI: So far, what is the biggest difference between critical care at SickKids and critical care at M.S. Ramaiah Medical College in Bangalore?

First of all, SickKids uses more modern and much newer equipment. There is access to more resources (including people) and there is also greater access to diagnostic tests. Secondly, SickKids' critical care unit manages and cares for a much wider spectrum of patients. At my hospital, we mostly treat acute infections including, pneumonia, diarrhea, meningitis, flu – the illnesses that plague our children most commonly. But here in Toronto, we care for trauma patients, post-malignancy patients, post-transplant children, and post-surgery patients as well. I am already learning a great deal about the management of these cases and expanding my skills in various areas of critical care.

Compared to SickKids' critical care unit, our unit is an infant! We have a long way to go. But, I am determined to grow it beyond everybody's expectations and become one of the best paediatric critical care units in the country!

HKI: What is the biggest challenge you face as a Fellow to date?

I would say my biggest challenge to date is trying to learn and incorporate the new processes and procedures so that I can think quickly and act efficiently. I know that I need time to adjust to the new professional environment and the way the Canadian health system works. There is a lot to learn right off the bat – especially since I am caring for such a wide spectrum of patients now – and I think time and practice will help me overcome this challenge.

HKI: What do you think will be your biggest gain?

I have already gained so much! I think that knowledge is a big part of this Fellowship: I'll learn how to care for a greater variety and complexity of critical care cases, I'll learn how to work with new and more modern equipment, and I will learn new monitoring procedures and techniques. I'll also be able to take all of this learning back to Bangalore and improve the way my colleagues and I care for our children.

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Healthier Children. A Better World.™

“Nations are built by the strength of their people; by investing in their children’s health, we invest in a better future for all.”

– Dr. Geoffrey Barker, HealthyKids International Senior Medical Advisor

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