

Improving the Health of Children in Guyana

Guyanese Diaspora Partner with the Guyanese Medical Community

For a population of 750,000 people, Guyana has two certified Pediatricians, both of whom are working in the private sector. There are no certified pediatricians in the entire public health service of Guyana, although this system is required to provide Pediatric & Neonatal care for the entire Guyanese pediatric population. In contrast, there are presently six pediatricians of Guyanese descent practicing in the Toronto area.

The infant mortality rate in Guyana, although improving, is still higher than some of the Caribbean Islands, but it still only ranks 125th in the world. The Government of Guyana has made great strides in attempting to improve the health of its children, especially with its immunization programs. However, the government recognizes that unless it can attract and retain adequate numbers of qualified pediatricians in its public health sector, it would not be able to achieve its stated goal of significant improvements in pediatric health care.

To address this important problem, the Government of Guyana, the University of Guyana (UG) and the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), in partnership with a newly formed and registered charitable organization titled "Guyana Help the Kids", have identified specific projects that are intended, over time, to increase the number of qualified pediatricians in the public sector, and to overall enhance the care provided by the country's public health sector to the children of Guyana.

Dr. Madan Rambaran, the Director of Medical & Professional Services of GPHC has been very proactive in facilitating this partnership with the strong support from Dr. Leslie Ramsammy (Minister of Health), Dr. Clive Bowman (Chief of Pediatrics), Mr. Michael Khan (CEO of GPHC) and Dr. Hardat Persaud (Pediatrician).

Dr. Narendra Singh, Chief of Pediatrics at Humber River Regional Hospital in Toronto, and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Toronto, has made multiple trips to Guyana to strengthen this partnership and to identify specific achievable and sustainable goals. Dr. Singh is also the President and founder of "Guyana Help the Kids" Organization. The initial projects would include, but not limited to:

1. Assisting the GPHC with the development of a 10 beds Neonatal Intensive Care (NICU) and 20 beds Pediatric Ward at GPHC, identified in its redevelopment plan;
2. Assisting the GPHC with the development of an equipment list for the two units, and to facilitate with the procurement of these equipment items.
3. Developing and implementing a Pediatric Residency Program in collaboration with the GPHC, the Ministry of Health and the University of Guyana. This program, which



Dr. Narendra C. Singh, Chief of Pediatrics, Humber River Regional Hospital and Asst. Professor of Pediatrics University of Toronto, Canada, with Dr. Clive Bowman, Chief of Pediatrics at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation

will be accredited by the University of Guyana, is aimed at increasing the number of qualified pediatricians in the public health sector with a view, over time, to substantially improve the quality of pediatric health services provided in the country. Dr. Singh has been in touch with twenty-six Pediatric faculty members from the University of Toronto and McMaster's University who have volunteered their time, and at their own expense, to travel to Guyana on a regular basis to provide bedside and didactic teaching to pre-selected Guyanese doctors. A curriculum, based upon the spectrum of diseases encountered, has been developed in consultation with the doctors in Guyana and the University of Guyana. The Government of Guyana has agreed to provide accommodation and security for the visiting faculty members.

Finding Guyana-born doctors is important so Dr. Singh has developed a web site (www.guyanadoctor.com) to identify doctors of Guyanese origin who would be interested in this and other such projects in Guyana. Dr. Singh's father, Mr. Chetram Singh, a former Administrator of GPHC, has been a very strong advisor and catalyst in this partnership.

Guyanese abroad have been very supportive of this initiative. There has been a fundraising event in partnership with the Vishnu Mandir Global Outreach Program in Toronto. The Brampton Flower City Rotary Club and Mr. Dhaman Kissoon's Annual Golf tournament have committed to purchasing specific pieces of equipment to provide respiratory support for premature babies. Donations to support this fragile and high-risk part of the Guyanese population can be made by contacting Dr. Narendra Singh (nsingh@guyanadoctor.com). A Tax receipt will be provided.