



Dr. Arun Garg, Anita Huberman and Dr. Arun Chockalingam

Cardiovascular Health 2010

- A Canada-India Health Initiative For Surrey

On June 19th, experts in all aspects cardiovascular and related health, will convene in Surrey, for a first of a kind conference on these issues, as they relate to people of South Asian origin. Doctors Arun Garg and Arun Chockalingam are the key individuals of this world-class conference. Business In Surrey Editor, Ray Hudson spoke with Dr. Garg and asked him how the conference came to be.

I was asked to prepare a report to build stronger pathways for cultural, educational, business and financial links between Canada and India. We identified health, technology and education as the principle foundational areas where India and Canada have common grounds, in addition to the traditional technology, information technology, infrastructure and environment.

As a result, I was asked by the Government of India to visit them under their distinguished visitors recognition, the first Canadian to be so recognized.

During my conversations with their Council of Medical Research it became clear that an exchange and links on a very broad base on a team on health would be a good starting step in building those relationships.

I felt we needed to do something about cardiovascular disease, which is the highest among Indians and South Asians over any other population group, not only in India or Canada, but among the entire diaspora of Indian origin. Is it a genetic predisposition, a cultural thing?

We really don't have an answer. That's why it's even more challenging and important that an answer be found. The problem is huge, as they say in space: Houston, we have a problem.

Can you quantify that problem to some degree?

There is a group in the United States and in the UK who are wrestling with the same problem. Some work has been done here in Surrey but our interest is to do that work more methodically, more scientifically. We estimate that in Surrey alone, with our large south Asian population, the burden of disease is far, far greater among this group, than the general population. Associated with that are estimates are that there is 3 to 4 times the prevalence of diabetes than the regular population. It's very hard to know because data is not kept according to ethnic origin. That's why this work has to be done.

I am co-chair, with Dr Michael Stevenson, President of SFU, of their India Advisory Committee, and I knew the university was very interested in India and in building relationships. Because my association is with Fraser Health (I've been here for 40 years) I recognize how big the problem is given the large demographic of the South Asian population.

Then I met Dr Arun Chockalingam, a professor of Global Health at SFU who, on his own, has been successfully championing this issue between Canada and India, so this is

where we came together. We call ourselves Arun squared.

What are the details of the program itself?

We've gathered together leading authorities, researchers, academicians, industry leaders and policy makers working in groups for the conference:

Research: Dr. Chockalingam, and his relationship with the Canadian Institute of Health Research and Indian Council of Medical Research is a great benefit.

Training and Education: The University of the Fraser Valley, Kwantlen Polytechnic University and Simon Fraser University (Surrey), along with the Fraser Health Authority, BCIT and UBC will come together, to try to connect with similar interests in India.

Individual Clinical care: even if you live the best and have the health promotion, you do get sick. So we need to address the sickness part of the disease as well.

Learning from each other to lower the burden: We have the leading clinicians from both countries. Dr KK Telwar, Director General Post graduate Institute of medical research in Chandigarh, which is in Punjab, is our designated leader of the program, will be working with leading clinicians in Canada and in BC on guidelines on the treatment side.

Population health: how it affects the population as a whole and what we can do about it, specifically prevention and

chronic disease management, a strong thing in BC, guidelines, protocols – this is an area I've been active in for the last 15 years.

Public and Social Policy: behaviour, life style modification, how you achieve those.

Technology, Innovation and Economic Development: These last two sessions will be of interest to the Surrey Board of Trade: We want to see what opportunities there are to enhance trade between the two countries.

E-health – the use of information technology to have people take more direct control of their own health, assisted by the University of Northern BC, Professor Erica Frank, and

Technology and Diagnostics – of personal interest to me

The conference is the springboard?

Yes, to raise public awareness. I think the most important session is a public forum with the experts on June 19th at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, in Newton. It's free and open to the public between 1:00-5:00 pm. We will have demonstration booths, with experts to discuss the problems, along with demonstrations from the Canadian Diabetes Association, BC Heart and Stroke Foundation, etc.

This is an opportunity to remind everybody, whether you're Asian or not, that we've got a big problem here.

Absolutely! We have a variety of speakers including a leading

cardiologist from Toronto, the top Indian Ayurvedic practitioner from India, and another practitioner from Toronto, to speak on the role of proper breathing, exercise and yoga. We even have celebrity Indian chef and author, Bal Arneson, who has written a best selling book, "Everyday Indian," in an effort to bring out healthy cuisine. She will share her recipes and show how to keep the taste and use the spices and herbs, but make day to day cooking more healthy. We urge everybody to come out.

The session on Sunday is open and free, but more like a traditional clinical conference on this subject. It's really of interest to health practitioners, nurses, doctors and pharmacists. It's also at Kwantlen Polytechnic in Surrey.

On the Monday, we start the real conference with some workshops at BCIT, very focused workshops on biomarkers and then opening ceremonies and plenary sessions. This part of the conference is by invitation only at SFU Surrey.

The Formal banquet is on June 22

Our gala night is for networking and bringing all these people together with the community at large, in a very relaxed environment at the Royal King Banquet Hall in Surrey. You will need a ticket for that event. It's on Tuesday June 22, 6:00-9:00pm. Tickets are \$100 each or \$800 for a table and registration is now open.

LEVY cont. from previous page

So not only do we have a disparity of pricing cross border – you can buy a book cheaper in the US - but Amazon is going to take on all comers in Canada now, much to the chagrin of Canadian booksellers. Our markets are so linked with the US, they are going to have

to do something or lose a very significant amount of market share.

Small business people are concerned about the impact of the HST on their business, what do you think will be the outcome of the tax on them?

They are concerned for good reason. One is that we were in recession when we started to hear about it. It's a very tough pill to swallow, when business isn't very good anyways. But when business is good, price increases, when passed along to the consumer,

have little effect when the demand is high. So yes, an HST will impact small business, yes it will impact the consumer, but if we have a fast growing economy, the impact will be a lot more negligible than if our economy was in a downturn. We will get used

to it. Business will thrive, will carry on, all I give you is the GST. There was a downturn when it happened, but now the GST, or Canada consumption tax is just a thing that happens, and we buy anyways. ☺