



Dr Arun Garg with keynote speakers Dr Srinath Reddy, Salim Yusuf and Arun Chockalingam



Dr. Salima Sharif talks about the higher risks of heart diseases among South Asian women



Dr Arun Garg

Indo-Canadian Doctor Brings Together World Experts to Fight Heart Disease

By: Pamela Verma

MD Candidate-University of British Columbia

Cardiovascular disease (CVD), including stroke and heart attack, is the top killer in the globe according to the World Health Organization. What is likely less appreciated is that the disease burden is not carried by the western world. In fact, 80% of CVD deaths are in second and third-world countries. Major risk factors for CVD are limited exercise, poor diet, and smoking; yet in these nations, resources are incredibly limited to tackle long-term health issues in light of competing interests such as food security and

political unrest.

One community of particular interest is South Asians living in the rapidly industrializing nation of India, but also throughout the Western world such as the United States, United Kingdom, and here in Canada. Recent research reveals that given the same set of risk factors, Indo-Canadians are more likely to suffer the consequences of CVD. The major question remains why and what can be done to lower this burden.

This epidemic has attracted the inter-

est of many, including an Indo-Canadian pathologist, Dr. Arun Garg. Garg's life was touched early by CVD when his grandmother suffered from a heart attack in the family home. Garg went to become a highly regarded physician in Canada, serving as President to the BC Medical Association in 1993-94 where he continued to lobby for this cause. Through his policy work, he became connected with the BC Government's Canada-India Market Advisory Committee, a network focussed on establishing

stronger relations between Canada and India. When education and health were identified as key areas to build partnerships and foster economic ties, Garg found his chance to make some big changes.

Garg met Dr. Mukesh Kumar, Director of International Affairs for the Indian Council of Medical Research and realized a conference on cardiovascular disease was incredibly fitting for the Committee's targets. Despite the last two decades of focussed research and health promotion investments in both countries, the rates of CVD are still high. What were we missing? Joining with Dr. Arun Chockalingam, an expert in Global Health in Canada, they formed the "Canada-India Cardiovascular Conference (CINS)". Their objective was to bring together world experts in research, yoga, medical education, public policy and more to develop targeted, strategic action items to tackle the disease burden of CVD both locally and internationally.

With its theme of "Building for Future: From knowledge to action" the conference had both local and global objectives. Recommendations from the conference will tackle the problem locally from multiple levels including at schools and the community, in clinical practice, and from epidemiological research. Enhancement and focus of these realms in a culturally-appropriate manner may finally start to bring down CVD amongst the Indo-Canadian population.

Globally, the conference provided an opportunity to collaborate with India by inviting Indian experts in disease prevention and health promotion to enhance and inform current healthy heart initiatives that go back to traditional routes, such as proper diet and exercise forms of Yoga and Pranayam.

"The conference was a starting point for the transfer of knowledge, an awareness campaign and a follow-up action plan to lower the burden of cardiovascular disease among South Asians both in Canada and in India", says Garg. These objectives were addressed in the Public forum, Clinical Symposium, Pre-Conference workshop on Biomarkers, and the main conference program. The public forum was especially significant as it connected this initiative with the public. Some 200 members of the community attended the public forum and heard the importance of a healthy life style, especially diet and physical activity, in health promotion and illness prevention. As a follow up from the conference, major effort will be placed on ongoing awareness projects through Fraser health, local community organizations and the City of Surrey.

We all can do our bit to live a healthy life, which is the message from the conference. This healthy life can be achieved by cutting on calories, salt and sugar. The "Indian diet", though generally healthy, is still not balanced.

The conference was jointly hosted by SFU and Fraser Health Authority with a number of partners from Canada and India. It provided a strong momentum for action and it is up to the community to take action and provide an opportunity for healthy living.

References:

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs317/en/index.html>

Canadian Health Care Academy



To Inspire, To Care, To Educate



Upcoming Winter Programs:

- Biology for Nursing
- Nursing Unit Clerk
- Access to Practical Nursing
- Practical Nursing



**FREE
LAPTOP**
WITH FULL
TIME PROGRAM
REGISTRATION

Information Sessions
Oct. 12th & Nov. 9th 6-8pm

International Transcripts Evaluated

93 Sixth Street, New Westminster, BC V3L 2Z8

Fax: 604-540-8550

www.chcabc.com info@chcabc.com

Phone: 604-540-2421