



PUHS - Patan University of Health Sciences

A Tool for Social Development in Rural Areas of Nepal

Nepal ranks at the bottom of the United Nations Human Development Index. Among the reasons are high infant mortality, high percentage of illiteracy, and low percentage of people with an education. Behind the hard facts are thousands of human beings who do not have access to basic social and health services. This is particularly the case in remote areas of Nepal.

This is the background for the plans for creating a new medical school in Nepal. It is relevant to ask if Nepal really needs another medical school. The answer is yes, because PUHS will put particular emphasis on training doctors who will want to serve poor people who are living in remote rural areas in Nepal. The PUHS project was initiated about three years ago by Dr. Arjun Karki and several colleagues at Patan Hospital in Kathmandu. In 2005, Dr. Robert F. Woollard from the Department of Family Practice, University of British Columbia, prepared a "Feasibility Study" for PUHS. The conclusion was that it is doable, but also has many challenges.

In 2005, a PUHS International Advisory Board was created with members from Canada, the United States, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Norway. In October 2006, the Board met for four days with Nepalese doctors to discuss goals for PUHS as well as curriculum and faculty development. The meeting decided the following PUHS Mission Statement: "Dedicated to sustained improvement of the health of people in Nepal,

especially those who are poor and living in rural areas, with love, innovation, equity and excellence in education, service and research."

MARIT BAKKE



Some of the Nepalese participants at the PUHS meeting in October 2006

Though PUHS will be based primarily at Patan Hospital, PUHS students will also rotate through the network of the smaller hospitals located in rural areas. Since the current physical facilities available at the Patan



Hospital will be insufficient for running the PUHS operation, it will be necessary to invest in additional infrastructure. The plan is to begin the first class of 50 students during fall 2008. Already being a paramedic and having worked in rurally located public

health care institutions will give the prospective medical students an added advantage to be selected in the PUHS medical school. PUHS is committed to offer at least five full scholarships to the deserving students, still leaving the great challenge of enabling the other 45 students, who will mostly come from rural areas, to pay the annual fee of 12,000 Euro. The Advisory Board will assist in developing

curriculum for Problem Based Learning, and in bringing foreign based volunteer basic science faculty and medical specialists who can teach students and serve as mentors for the Nepalese PUHS staff.

PUHS is a very ambitious project. During the October 2006 meeting it was said that it takes *Dreamers*, *Doers*, and *Critics* to make any new projects come true. PUHS includes all three types, but right now PUHS is awaiting the Government of Nepal's approval. During meetings in October and November 2006 with the Minister of Education, representatives from other Ministries and government agencies, and with Prime Minister G. P. Koirala, PUHS received great support.

Anyone who is interested in learning more about or collaborate with PUHS may contact Dr. Arjun Karki, e-mail: drakarki@wlink.com.np, or Marit Bakke, e-mail: marit.bakke@media.uib.no

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The International Advisory Board and Nepalese PUHS representatives with Prime Minister Koirala, November 4, 2006. Dr. Arjun Karki fourth from right.