NEWS RELEASE

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B.C. welcomes five new doctors to Vancouver Island

VICTORIA – As part of the Province’s work to make sure British Columbians have access to high-quality primary care, 14 additional internationally trained physicians will begin practising in rural and remote communities throughout the province, including five family doctors on Vancouver Island.

Two doctors will practise in Cobble Hill, two on Salt Spring Island and one in Campbell River.

The recruitment is through the Practice Ready Assessment-BC (PRA-BC) program, a partnership between the provincial government and Doctors of BC through the Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues.

“The Practice Ready Assessment program strengthens health-care services in rural and remote communities throughout B.C.,” said Health Minister Terry Lake. “Doctors in small communities not only contribute to the health and wellness of their patients, but to the community itself.”

This is the fourth group of internationally trained family doctors to be granted licences to practise in B.C. after going through the PRA-BC program. A total of 53 family doctors now are providing care to patients in rural and underserved communities under the program.

The new physician practising in Campbell River, Dr. Sathiamurthi Naicker, appreciated the supportive aspect of the program.

“From day one I never felt alone,” he said. “Everyone has been so fantastic. They take you by the hand and really show you the ropes. Doors were always open and everyone was always willing to help out.”

Dr. Naicker completed his 12-week assessment in Port McNeil and was impressed by the openness of the community.

“I consider myself quite lucky to have done my assessment in Port McNeil. My assessors had done the program before so they really understood what my needs were and gave me the necessary tools. But they were fantastic beyond the program requirements, and even invited me into their home for dinner.”

Together with his wife and two small children, Dr. Naicker moved to Canada from South Africa, and is quickly settling into rural community living.

“We had never seen snow before so it’s been exciting,” he said. “Our kids are trying out the ‘Canadian’ sports. They’re taking ice-skating lessons and we’ve also been up to Mount Washington to ski. They love it. For me though, it’s all about the people. It’s not only the
medicine that makes me want to practise here – it’s the people.”

As part of the program, doctors undergo a rigorous assessment process, spending three months with a B.C. physician who evaluates their skills as they care for patients. Physicians successfully completing the program commit to practice for a minimum of three years in a designated rural community in need. The new physicians have begun practising this month or are in the process of establishing their practices.

“On behalf of North Vancouver Island families, I warmly welcome Dr. Naicker to the area,” said Don McRae, MLA for Comox Valley. “Having him here will strengthen health-care services across the region and allow patients to receive care closer to home.”

“Internationally trained physicians continue to make a valuable contribution to the delivery of health care and patient services particularly in rural communities. The PRA-BC program helps fill the demand for skilled physicians within B.C.’s rural health authorities and its many underserviced rural communities,” said Dr. Alan Ruddiman, president of Doctors of BC.

The Province is working with health-care providers, health authorities and community agencies on a comprehensive strategy to improve access to integrated primary health-care services throughout the province. The PRA-BC is one component of this strategy.

The strategy builds on the work of the 35 Divisions of Family Practice to implement innovative changes that meet the needs of their specific communities, such as recruiting new doctors and preparing for retirements, introducing team-based practices, helping general practitioners increase their capacity to accept new patients, using telehealth and creating stronger links between family doctors and community support services.

The Practice Ready Assessment program is one of the key ways the B.C. government is taking action to strengthen and grow rural communities. To further support the needs of rural communities and grow local economies, the Province announced a Rural Economic Development Strategy on March 3.

Learn More:

To learn more about the Practice Ready Assessment-BC program, please visit: http://www.prabc.ca/

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