



\$1 mn gift for South Asian heart center

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MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA: El Camino Hospital announced that Los Altos Hills resident, Malini Alles, founder of Stree: Global Investments for Women Foundation, has donated \$1 million to the South Asian Heart Center, the first organization in the world to address the high incidence of coronary artery disease among South Asians. Alles' donation is the first major gift received by the center.

The South Asian Heart Center envisions dramatic improvements in the health of South Asians, in many cases saving lives, by empowering clients and health care providers with tailored best practices for detecting and treating this preventable disease. The center will be located on the hospital's campus. Scheduled to open in fall 2005, the center is seeking additional leadership gifts from the community.

According to Lee Domanico, El Camino Hospital CEO, "We understand the critical community need for a center dedicated to reducing heart disease among South Asians, and are committed to supporting it. I now invite South Asian leaders, philanthropists, and others concerned about this critical issue to partner with us in making the South Asian Heart Center become a reality."

The rate of coronary artery disease (CAD) for South Asians-men and women who trace their origins from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka-is four times higher than the general population, both here and in India. Half of all heart attacks among South Asians occur under the age of 50, and a quarter of them occur under the age of 40, often with no prior symptoms.

Traditional risk factors fail to account for South Asians suffering heart attacks at a greater rate and at an earlier age: this population does not have a higher incidence of cigarette smoking, obesity, hypertension, or high blood pressure, and nearly half are life-long vegetarians who exercise regularly. The good news is that laboratory tests can detect several factors that are better predictors of CAD; unfortunately, few doctors routinely screen South Asian men and women for these factors, and even traditional screenings are seldom performed at the appropriate age for this population.

The body of knowledge on CAD among South Asians draws largely from the pioneering research of Dr. Enas Enas, director of the Coronary Artery Disease among Indians (CADI) Research Foundation, and a member of the South Asian Heart Center's advisory board. According to Dr. Enas, "The South Asian Heart Center at El Camino Hospital in Silicon Valley will be the first organization in the world to address this critical problem. This center will demonstrate the importance of early screening and prevention education to avoid cardiac catastrophes, and its impact will be felt in countries around the globe. I

am honored to be associated with this center."

Initially, the South Asian Heart Center will provide cardiac screenings for the identified risk factors in addition to prevention education and referrals to wellness providers (e.g. yoga, fitness, meditation, diet, and exercise). The center's education program will also target the medical community with information about the need to adopt cardiac screening guidelines tailored to South Asians with the goal to have doctors prescribe, and insurers cover, routine tests of South Asian patients at a younger age for the specific predictors of heart disease among this population.

Padma Srinivasan, President of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin and chairman of the South Asian Heart Center's patient-education/physician-relations committee, states, "By equipping patients and their physicians with information on risk factors, best-practice tools, and screening and prevention guidelines, the center will encourage them to work together to develop healthy heart programs."

Ms. Alles contributed the lead gift for the South Asian Health Center fundraising campaign in furtherance of the mission of her foundation, Stree: Global Investments in Women. Stree's focus is to inspire and empower leadership among women living at risk, including in the field of health care, in the United States and internationally. She also had a very personal motivation: "All four of my grandparents and my father died of a heart attack before they turned 65 years old. El Camino Hospital is the first organization to take notice of this epidemic and it is taking the initiative to do something about it for the South Asian community. This is an extremely important project and worthy of the attention of every South Asian family living in Silicon Valley. The willingness of all concerned to seek the necessary funding for the South Asian Heart Center, which will address the medical needs specific to the South Asian population, should be a call to action for each of us to show compassion and financial support."

El Camino Hospital's history of supporting community-based initiatives such as the Rota Care clinic, coupled with its award-winning cardiac programs, make it an ideal sponsor for the new center. El Camino Hospital operates as a not-for-profit hospital, returning all revenue to the community in the form of improved programs, services, equipment and facilities.