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**SOUTH ASIAN HEART CENTER HOSTS
FIRST PHYSICIAN ADVISORY BOARD SUMMIT**
Leading cardiologists and researchers help address global epidemic

MOUNTAIN VIEW, California, November 14, 2006 – Seven world-renowned physicians will serve on the South Asian Heart Center (SAHC) Physician Advisory Board, which will hold its first summit November 14, in Chicago during the American Heart Association Scientific Sessions. The SAHC, launched earlier this year at El Camino Hospital in Mountain View, California, is the first nonprofit center in the world devoted to the prevention of coronary artery disease (CAD) in people of South Asian descent.

The Physician Advisory Board members include:

- Dr. Naras Bhat – a UC Berkeley Professor, and a specialist in metabolic cardiology, who has done extensive research on how stress affects the heart, and on stress management using cybernetics
- Dr. Kanu Chatterjee – the Ernest Gallo Distinguished Professor of Medicine at UCSF Medical Center, a world-renowned researcher in vascular reactivity and heart failure, and on the use of drugs such as ACE inhibitors and vasodilators, which have become the standard of care for heart failure
- Dr. Enas A. Enas – one of the worlds leading researchers on heart disease in South Asians and Director of the CADI Research Foundation. He was the first cardiologist to publicly address and scientifically prove that the heart disease rate among Indians in the United States was three to four times higher than the general population
- Dr. Thomas Fogarty – a former Stanford University Medical Center professor of surgery whose minimally invasive Fogarty embolectomy catheter revolutionized vascular surgery
- Dr. Anmol S. Mahal – a gastroenterologist and president of the California Medical Association
- Dr. Prediman K. (PK) Shah – internationally renowned cardiologist, clinician-teacher and researcher, and Director of the Division of Cardiology and the Atherosclerosis Research Center at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
- Dr. Robert Superko – Director of the Cholesterol, Genetics, and Heart Disease Institute and a leading expert in Far East lipid disorders



“We are grateful for the expertise of this brilliant group of physicians, which comprises virtually a ‘Who’s Who’ of leading experts on heart disease, particularly as it affects those of South Asian descent,” said Ken Graham, chief executive officer of El Camino Hospital. “They are pledged to a most important goal; changing the prevailing standard of practice for evaluation of South Asians’ risk of heart disease, as well as for treatment. That’s why we are launching the first summit of the group at the AHA Scientific Sessions, where the thought leaders of the industry from around the nation gather.”

The unique South Asian Heart Center (SAHC) is designed to address the epidemic of heart disease among people from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, who are four times more likely to suffer a heart attack, and at younger ages, without prior symptoms or warning and without presenting the same risk factors as the general population.

"Most physicians evaluate South Asian patients the same way they evaluate other patients when assessing for coronary artery disease risk," said Dr. P.K. Shah. "We now know that this traditional approach can miss a lot of such individuals at risk for disease. We must identify and take into account emerging risk factors-beyond high blood pressure, high LDL cholesterol, smoking, and obesity-that could play a decisive causative role for this group. As we better understand the interaction of all these factors, our goal is to educate physicians to be aware of and respond to the critical differences within this population."

“It is astonishing to note that more than half of heart attacks among South Asians occur before age 50, yet NCEP ATPIII published guidelines for diagnosis don’t call for evaluation until much later,” said César Molina, M.D., Medical Director of the SAHC. “The average age at which heart attacks occurs in the general male population is about 66, and it is over age 70 for the female population. But among South Asians, the higher rates of heart disease apply across the board and even lifelong vegetarians, regular exercisers, and non-smokers are not spared. That’s why it is critical that we change the thinking not only of physicians, but of the South Asian community that is so profoundly affected by this epidemic.”

The SAHC Physician Advisory Counsel will provide expertise on a variety of aspects of the center’s programs. The center currently offers comprehensive individual assessment of risk factors, personalized recommendations for prevention focusing on lifestyle modifications (with referrals for medical intervention as necessary), referrals to wellness resources such as nutritionists knowledgeable in South Asian diets and fitness, yoga, meditation and stress reduction centers, and continued periodic follow-ups to recheck participants and encourage real progress. The program is provided free of charge, funded by community donations.

“In addition to improving the heart health of South Asians locally, we hope to help facilitate further research into what’s really driving the high rate of heart disease in this population,” said Dr. Shah. “We know that rampant heart disease is affecting South Asians wherever they live in urban settings. If we find ways to slow or reverse the progress of disease in this population, the benefits will be realized worldwide.”

It was the research of Advisory Board member Dr. Enas that helped spur the formation of the South Asian Heart Center. He showed that traditional risk factors fail to account for the increased rate of cardiovascular disease in South Asians – so conventional screening doesn’t adequately identify those at risk. Most standard risk factors – high blood pressure, smoking, high LDL (bad) cholesterol, low HDL (good) cholesterol, obesity, hypertension, and

sedentary lifestyle – apply to South Asians as well. But in recent years, researchers have identified additional genetic and metabolic risk factors that play a causative role in premature heart disease among the South Asian population:

- The dramatic prevalence among South Asians of Metabolic Syndrome/Insulin Resistance (a pre-diabetic condition that can include low HDL cholesterol, high triglycerides, abdominal obesity, high blood pressure and high fasting glucose) and full-blown diabetes
- Higher levels among South Asians of Lipoprotein (a) concentrations despite normal cholesterol levels. These are genetically determined and are considered an emerging risk factor in the overall U.S. population
- Lower levels of HDL2b, the protective particle within the good cholesterol that is responsible for reverse cholesterol transport, even with normal HDL levels
- Significantly higher Homocysteine levels, which are associated with higher risk of cardiac death

“A significant benefit of our program is the ability to conduct further research into the interactions of these emerging risk factors so that we may develop more effective prevention programs,” said Dr. Molina. “Our research can benefit a global population.”

About the South Asian Heart Center

In 2004 El Camino Hospital (ECH) brought a team of more than 80 health professionals together with South Asian community leaders to discuss the abnormally high incidence of heart disease among South Asian populations and explore the idea of a wellness center to address the problem. Today, the Center’s staff members work with more than 40 volunteers to help carry out the Center’s mission.

SAHC is a community-funded organization made possible through a growing awareness of the heart health problems of South Asians, and the generosity of the community. Since its inception, ECH has provided significant resources to make SAHC a reality. To schedule a screening, volunteer time, or donate to the center, visit the web site at www.southasianheartcenter.org or call (650) 940-SAHC (7242).

About El Camino Hospital:

Located on a 41-acre campus in the heart of Silicon Valley, El Camino Hospital serves residents in the El Camino Hospital District – Mountain View, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, and portions of Sunnyvale and Palo Alto – as well as those in surrounding communities. Established in 1961, this non-profit, locally controlled community-based hospital has delivered the highest level of medical services to the community for more than four decades. Recognized both locally and nationally for its quality of care and high patient, physician and employee satisfaction scores, ECH is the only hospital in the Bay Area and one of only six in California that has been designated as a nursing magnet hospital by the American Nursing Credentialing Center. To learn more about ECH and its services, visit our web site at www.elcaminohospital.org. For a physician referral, visit the web site or call the El Camino Health Line at (800) 216-5556.

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