

Humanitarian Cardiothoracic Surgery Camp in War Stricken Area: CardiacEye International Foundation with its Little Heart Project in the Valley of Swat, Pakistan

Maqsood M Elahi^{1*} and Bashir M Matata²

¹*Heart-Lung and Research Institute, CardiacEye International Foundation, Lahore, Pakistan*

²*Clinical Trials and Epidemiological Evaluation Unit, Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, United Kingdom*

***Corresponding Author:** Maqsood M Elahi, Heart-Lung and Research Institute, CardiacEye International Foundation, Lahore, Pakistan.

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CardiacEye International Foundation (www.cardiaceye.com) is an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization that was established in 2013 to provide free and affordable adult and pediatric heart surgeries around the world in underdeveloped and developing countries. Its head office is in USA with public offices in Australia, United Kingdom, USA, Kenya and Pakistan. CEIF is equipped with highly qualified medical, nursing and allied professionals who volunteer their time, funds and expertise to carry out specific missions in education, research and provision of life saving cardiac surgery solutions wherever the need arise. CardiacEye International Foundation has a team of experts of high caliber, committed and dedicated for any given job, from Pakistan, UK, USA and Australia. We like to work efficiently and professionally to make things effective. The Foundation vision is to promote healthier lives by supporting people with cardiothoracic and cardiovascular disease. Yet to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease through preventive and curative measures including research training and awareness for quality improvement in the living standards of people as its mission.

Importance of Cardiovascular Program

In South East Asia countries such as Pakistan, the leading causes of mortality in patients over 5 years of age are pulmonary tuberculosis (19.6%), congestive cardiac failure (10.2%) and accidents and injuries (2.95%). It is noted that congestive cardiac failure is the third commonest cause of death in patients over 5 years of age. It is a matter of concern that most people with heart disease are often not aware of their conditions because of the absence of diagnostic facilities and clinically skilled physicians to make the diagnosis or offer appropriate treatment. Rheumatic heart disease, congenital heart disease and Ischemic heart disease are the commonest causes of congestive cardiac failure. Consequently, there is a huge population with heart disease who just die because they are not diagnosed or simply because of lack of skilled surgeons and equipment. Excluding the affordable classes who get treatment in the private hospitals in neighboring countries and Europe/USA, the majority of non-affording patients end up having high mortality. This is of particular concern for infant, in Pakistan where infant mortality exceeds 4% directly due to congenital heart disease.

Achievement So Far in Pakistan

The Cardiac Eye International Foundation was inaugurated in 2013 with the first projects implemented in Pakistan. The first ever Cardiac Eye International Foundation (CEIF) project commenced in Pakistan which was in partnership with hospitals all over Pakistan. The aim was to develop it into a centre of excellence in training for cardiac surgery in Pakistan. CEIF with its donations from other partners provided financial support to the charity program and over the last few years has implemented free heart surgery services for all comers with congenital heart defects. The CEIF founder and the chairman Professor Maqsood Elahi has performed over 50 adult and over 57 pediatric open heart operations, as well as many closed cardiac and thoracic procedures over last 3 years in Pakistan.

Cardiac Eye International Foundation is already in the process of establishing Higher Surgical Training programme at different University teaching Hospitals all around the world. Similar collaborations are planned for the University of Health Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan through the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, University of Southampton UK and Baylor Scott and White, Texas, USA.

Little Heart Project- Heart Camp in the Valley of Swat

CardiacEye International Foundation organized a three-day free heart surgery medical camp, aiming facilitation of free medical facilities to the poor, hence, marked the Pakistan Day (10 - 13 August, 2017) at Begum Effendi Hospital, Baghderi. The free medical camp was inaugurated by ‘Nazim’ of the Swat Valley, Brig (R) Azam Effendi and Professor Dr Maqsood Elahi and his team (Figure 1). Many people even from far flung areas showed up for a medical checkup and a number of senior doctors and specialists provided their expertise. Diagnostic laboratory services were provided. Approximately, 148 patients, including 50 of the children selected for surgery from this camp; were treated and medicines were also provided to locals; free of cost. The patients were provided with the facility of general checkup, tests and all other essential treatments. This is the second camp organized in the last two years.



Professor Dr Maqsood Elahi at the hospital with children during the camp.

“We make it sure to sit till the last moment in order to treat the maximum number of patients in the area”, Professor Dr Maqsood Elahi (The Founder and Chairman of the CardiacEye International Foundation and a cardiothoracic surgeon). “People appreciated the effort and were of the view that they couldn’t have afforded expensive treatments but this camp served them with best medical treatment for free”. He further added; “Since 2013, Little Heart Projects in Pakistan has raised more than \$50,000 for surgeries on children, where remedies for congenital heart disease are lacking or absent. Open-heart surgery on children weighing just a few kilogrammes or on babies only weeks old is so complicated that in Pakistan, only a few surgeons can and will do it. Congenital heart disease affects the poorest most. In Pakistan, it costs around \$7,000 to fix. In the absence of a miracle donation, many simply wither and die. “Eighty percent of them are below the poverty line. According to the statistics published by previous reports [1-4], studies showed that of 1,000 babies born, 25 had congenital heart disease. This rate is around three times that of western countries.

Focused on providing health services in cardio-vascular diseases, it has also embarked upon a program to educate local people in prevention as due to their traditional life style of high meat intake in diet, easy going life style, genetics etc., they suffer from one of the highest cardiovascular problems.

Cycling is not only a good way of doing cardio exercise but we intend to promote this cause over there. For the first time in the terrorism stricken cleared area by the Pakistan Army and the local people having their lives back to track, CardiacEye International Foundation initiated to organise the first *Tour de Swat* in Pakistan on the pattern of the *Tour de France* with the collaboration of Cycling and Adven-

ture Club, Pakistan (Figure 2). This event was for selected cyclists only starting from Lahore and going to Swat valley for the charity ride continuing the tradition in hopes of funding research, raising awareness, and providing support to survivors. Every 7 minutes someone dies from heart disease and stroke in Pakistan. The Foundation's goal is to achieve its 2020 goal of reducing Pakistani rate of death from heart disease and stroke by 25%.



Cyclists from around the country participated in raising awareness for heart disease among the people of the Swat Region.

Our mission is MUCH larger than this. NO ONE in Pakistan should ever have to sell a property or take a loan for heart surgery.

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