

**Dear Alumni and Friends;**

**September 30, 2014**

Welcome to the communication from "The Govt. Medical College Alumni Association" (GMCAA):

*On behalf of all the alumni and Kashmiri diaspora, let me express **our gratitude and appreciation** to the Principal & Dean of Govt. Medical College Srinagar, Dr. Rafiq A. Pampori, his entire faculty; Dr. Saleem-ur-Rehman, Director Health Services; Dr. Showkat Zargar, Director SKIMS, all the dedicated physicians, staff and volunteers who are working overtime under the most difficult circumstances in Kashmir today. **We owe them a debt of gratitude for doing a phenomenal job under the most trying conditions.** We wish and pray that God Almighty keep them safe and healthy.*

*This communication is meant **not only for GMC alumni but all the physicians and healthcare professionals of Kashmiri heritage and friends from around the globe.** Thank you all for your concern, e-mails and phone calls regarding the catastrophic floods in Kashmir that has decimated the healthcare institutions in Srinagar and many parts of Jammu & Kashmir. A number of GMC and other Kashmiri alumni have been working hard, alongside the local physicians across the state, to provide compassionate care in spite of major limitations and handicaps.*

*Because of these efforts, we have been able to establish significant contacts on the ground in Srinagar and establish channels of communications amongst various agencies. In cooperation with Dean of GMC, Director Health Services, Director SKIMS, local physicians, NGO's and many volunteers, two of the alumni from US, Drs. A. Rauf Mir and Ammer Syed, are working hard to coordinate some of these efforts. In this regard, please note the following:*

1) *Let me start with the **message from the GMC Dean and Principal, Dr. Rafiq A. Pampori, received on September 27, 2014:** " May Allah bless you all for the concern you have for our people, in general, and for GMC, in particular. GMC is facing the toughest times in its history but I have strong feeling that Allah will help us Insha-Allah. I think the co-ordinated effort of all our alumni under the able leadership of Prof. Qazi Sb in collaboration with our GMC alumni office is the need of the hour and will prove more fruitful than individual efforts." Dr. Pampori's desire and message for us all to collaborate is clear and similar to the calls from all quarters.*

2) *Many alumni physicians have already reached Kashmir or are on their way in next 10 days. The ones that I have been informed about includes: Drs. Suhail*

*Allaqaband, Khalid Bashir, Khursheed Guru, Muneeb Haroon, Rafit Hassan, M. Fuad Jan, Shahnawaz Karim, Faroque A. Khan, A. Rauf Mir, Mumtaz Mir, Parvez Mir, Tanveer Mir, G. M. Najjar, Shoukat Qari and Ammer Syed. Many others may be planning in coming weeks and months.*

3) *Some of us have had the opportunity to discuss at length the ground situation, especially, with those who just returned from Kashmir (Drs. Khursheed Guru, Muneeb Haroon and Rafit Hassan). That discussion and feedback, as well as the essence of numerous national and international phone conferences over the last three weeks, was taken into account while **writing this report for you**. (Please note that the focus of this report is only healthcare).*

4) *A **technical team comprising** of Dr. Shakti Gupta (Medical Superintendent, AIIMS, New Delhi) and Dr. Bomic (Safdar Jang Hospital, New Delhi) that visited Srinagar last week with Dr. Harsh Verdhani (Health Minister) and the Director General Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, have surveyed the damage to the Medical College and all the associated hospitals. Their assessment reveals practically decimation of the healthcare facilities in Srinagar that will take significant resources and time to replenish. This assessment with a price tag of well over **Rs. 260 Crores** has been sent to the Govt. but its disposition remains unclear at this time.*

5) *The assessment of the team mentioned in item # 4 above is that **practically ALL elements of patient care and medical education have been destroyed**. It would be a dream come true if the Govt. would build entirely new facilities, realizing that GMC and its associated hospitals were built long time ago and are a relic of times past. But, I am afraid, that is not going to happen right now.*

6) *What assistance can the alumni and Kashmiri diaspora (and expatriate) offer to GMC and other institutions for the care of our brethren? Many of you have sent suggestions. Some suggestions are for a later date while others can be implemented now (listed below).*

7) *Our Alumni Association (GMCAA) has joined hands with Revive Kashmir, a group of younger and older Kashmiri expatriates and diaspora from around the world to augment and enhance our efforts in a coordinated fashion. Many sub-groups are working feverishly to make a positive contribution in their respective fields of assignments. One such dedicated group of physicians and researchers is working, in consultation with Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States and officials in Kashmir, on issues of public health. Drs. Khalid Bashir, Khalid*

*Iqbal, Salim Kamili, Salim M. Khan, Rehana Kauser, Altaf Lal, A. Rauf Mir, Showkat Qari, Khalid Qazi, , Sakib Qureishi, Ammer Syed have done an admirable job in formulating brochures and write ups for general use.*

8) *After discussion with the Dean GMC, Director Health Services, Director SKIMS and many hardworking, dedicated physicians and researchers on ground (Drs. Allaqaband, Manzoor Halwai, Arshad Hussein, Javid Iqbal, Rizwana Kanth, Rehana Kauser, Altaf Lal, Salim M Khan, Parvaiz Koul, M. Maqbool Mir, A. Rouf, Parvaiz Shah (plus a number of equally dedicated physicians, nurses, and healthcare workers) and based on a realistic approach, **many options have been developed** for your consideration. Please review these and **respond with your adoption options and suggestions as soon as possible:***

A) *It has been uniformly recommended that we **do not send** any medications or routine items from the US, UK, Europe or other countries. It is far easier and cheaper to buy such items in India;*

B) *That we do not send any cash at this time from overseas. However, we must collect **donations for medical relief and equipment NOW** in our respective area/region for use in coming weeks. These funds will be **needed within next 4-8 weeks** as we develop credible, authentic and safe mechanism in consultation with local senior faculty and medical fraternity including Dr. R. A. Pampori, Dr. G. Q. Allaqaband, Dr. S. Zargar, Dr. P. A. Shah, Dr. S. Majid, Dr. A. Hussain, Dr. Naveed N. Shah, Dr. J. Iqbal, Dr. P. Koul and many others. Please keep your donations ready and be assured the funds will be used for the **expressed purposes you will have identified.***

C) *It is strongly recommended that any individual or group of alumni **adopt a specific project.** For example, one group can adopt equipment for GI Lab; another group can adopt ventilators and respirators; another one an operating room; yet another one MRI unit and so on and so forth. Please collect your thoughts in your region or with your circle of family and friends and **adopt a project of your choice. We can tailor it to your budget.** Please contact us so we can discuss this further with you. For several reasons we have not shared the complete “Wish List” with you at this time, **but we are ready to discuss individual project(s) with you at any time.** Please note that we are in constant contact with the key physicians in Kashmir so that right decisions are made in a timely fashion. Please feel free to contact me by e-mail or phone at your convenience.*

D) Such equipment, as mentioned above, **will be purchased in India** and there will be no middle man. The equipment and supplies can be available in relatively a short time, we do not have to deal with customs, installation and servicing is easier and cheaper. There are other advantages that make this option more predictable.

E) As mentioned above, we are not advocating or planning to send cash donation for equipment to Kashmir. However, if you are **in Kashmir and would like to donate in local currency to GMC**, you may send donations directly to the "GMC Relief Fund": Acc. No."Sub- G-25" in the name of Principal GMC, Jammu & Kashmir Bank, Karan Nagar, Srinagar.

E) If you feel that **you can procure any equipment**, as some of you have indicated, please confirm if you are able to ship it to the **Dean of GMC** directly who can identify the best place for its use. We have not received any guarantee from **Customs** for duty-free clearance. GMC officials, Alumni Association and Revive Kashmir are working to help secure such clearance for customs. However, there is no guarantee of that. If any information becomes available regarding this issue, we will share that with you right away.

F) The office for "**The Govt. Medical College Alumni Association**" (GMCAA) has been established in the Medical College with designated staff. The Dean and the Principal of Govt. Medical College, currently Dr. Rafiq A. Pampori, will be the **Patron and Chair** of the GMCAA. The designated staff members are Miss. **Rahila Majeed** (Assistant Programmer to work on website, list serve etc.) and Mr. **Waseem Khan** (Junior Assistant to help establish an alumni office). Both are copied on this e-mail. The initiative to establish an alumni office had been in the pipe line for about two years, initially started by Drs. Faroque A. Khan and Khalid J. Qazi. It was **finalized** when few alumni (Umeer Ashraf, Aijaz Gundroo, Shais Jallu, Munis Mattoo, A. Rauf Mir and Khalid J. Qazi) met with the Dean and key faculty members on several occasions at the end of August 2014. Unfortunately due to the recent calamity, we could not implement the decision at the time.

G) GMC and its affiliated institutions can benefit by training of their younger faculty in specialty areas (**Mini-fellowships** generally from two to four months). This was initiated by Dr. Faroque A. Khan several years ago through **American College of Physicians** and continued by Drs. Tanveer Mir and Khalid J. Qazi. More recently Dr. Khursheed Guru through **Guru Foundation** has started similar initiative in several disciplines of Medicine including Nursing. Dr. Majid Jahangir (Asstt. Prof. Radiology, GMC) and Dr. Jangbahadur Singh Sarna (Asstt. Prof. Pathology, SKIMS Medical College) **just arrived in Buffalo a couple of days ago** for such mini-

*fellowship. I hope we can expand this initiative significantly. **We are looking for alumni who can facilitate such training for physicians in all specialties as well as in nursing disciplines.** The selection will be based on the respective organizational or institutional standards after screening and appropriate selection from the Dean, GMC, and the selection committee. **Please explore this option** across the globe especially if you are in a teaching and/or a tertiary care institution. We are available to answer any question you may have in this regard.*

*H) **Physicians continue to volunteer services** on ground in Kashmir. I understand that there is sufficient number of physicians in the cities but not as many in distant rural areas of Kashmir. If you are planning to volunteer your time and services please notify us about the time frame, your specialty/expertise and geographic location you are interested in. We will **put you in touch with the GMC alumni office and the Dean** so that your time spent in volunteering is most fulfilling.*

*Hope you are able to fully review the document and join in a conversation about how best we can help our folks back in Kashmir. **Not much will be accomplished unless YOU are an integral part of this effort.** We can be only as successful as you would like it to be. So, please join this effort today as an active partner. **Thank you for your care, compassion, commitment and consideration of this humble request.***

*Finally, I want to thank two of our alumni (**Drs. Seema Bhat and Aijaz Gundroo**, who happen to be life partners as well) for working with me in Buffalo on this project every single day. I would be totally helpless without their constant availability and assistance in all spheres of this initiative.*

*Thought you might like to read the following article published yesterday.*

*With my best.....Khalid*

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*Greater Kashmir, Srinagar, Monday September 29, 2014*

***Kashmir's Healthcare: Total Destruction  
But this is how we can help rebuild it  
TASK AHEAD***

***DR. RUMANA MAKHDOOMI***

*For most of us, who have been trained at Govt. Medical College, Srinagar, and associated hospitals, GMC Srinagar is like a mother; a mother institution that shaped you into whatever you have become today. From the core of medicine, to the code of ethics - you learnt it all here! Difficult challenges kept on creeping and leaping but in spite of turmoil the benchmark of healthcare in Kashmir; GMC Srinagar with all its associated hospitals remained a hope.*

*Today, as the ravaging floods have transformed it into a mass of filth and dirt with a total destruction of its infrastructure - I am worried, worried for the people of Kashmir, worried for students who are being trained there, and worried that a precious treasure is perhaps lost. Those wards, those OPDs, those theaters, those laboratories, and those state-of-the-art machines are all smeared beyond recognition. That auditorium, that emergency, that canteen, those hostels and those ambulances are all in a pitiable condition. The very site of SMHS hospital and other submerged hospitals, like Bone and Joint Hospital, Pediatric Hospital, and LD Hospital pierces a stony heart too! Is this the hardest punch in the crown of healthcare in Kashmir?*

*In this moment of grief, thankfully, there are so many who want to help Kashmir, too many requests for help are pouring in from all the continents of the world. Snapping of all lines of communication ensured that the actual news of Kashmir's destruction did not reach the world in first fortnight after floods. Now that the lines are opening we have a duty to ask for what makes the greatest difference to our lives! After food, clothing and shelter, healthcare is what needs to be restored. As one of my colleagues*

*put it: “we will not die of hunger, but we will die for want of healthcare”. So if this is the situation, healthcare needs to be put back onto the rails with the same vigor that saved lakhs of us trapped in floods. Now what do you do and how do you do it?*

*Let us know it for now that in our premier hospitals almost all equipment is lost. From a needle to a high tech MRI there is a requirement for everything. A bed, a trolley, a table, a chair, an ECG machine, an endoscope, a microscope, an X-ray plant, a glass slide, a stand, a computer, a ventilator, a pack of stains, refrigerators - all this basic, and much more is needed in our hospitals. It is worth recalling that GMC Srinagar over the past 2-years had transformed from a relatively primitive hospital to a high-tech hospital where latest biomedical equipment was installed in almost all the departments, including radiology, pathology, microbiology, medicine, surgery and their allied specialties. Those of us who are in various institutions abroad will know the importance of each equipment and instrument. If as we hear, a lot of money is being collected abroad for flood relief-that money should be earmarked to put healthcare back on the rails. Doctors abroad who are interested in providing medical relief should focus on rebuilding SMHS hospital and other allied hospitals.*

*Government of India should be approached for relaxing custom duties for various biomedical equipment, even if there is no relaxation; this is no excuse for not sending across the equipment. All routes should be tried and explored to make the things happen. Medical teams and drugs are not needed at present. Doctors are in plenty here, but specialized care is lacking because infrastructure has been damaged. Oxygen plant needs restoration, the incinerator needs to be in working condition, Lasers need to be operational again, medical and surgical ICUs need to function again and operation theaters have to be started again. How will this happen if each one of us does not do his bit? Though my appeal is to Kashmiri doctors, especially the ones working abroad, doctors of valley and general public too should come forward for help and support. We all need our hospitals for our today and tomorrow. Whatever little we can put in, we should.*

*It is highly satisfying that not only doctors but volunteers from all walks of life are participating in ‘Operation Clean Up GMC’. This drive has to gain momentum. We all have to come together to help GMC. The day each one of us takes his own belongings, and makes it available for a patient in our ravaged hospitals - GMC will rise again from the rubble, from the ruins. Looking at our commitment to fight this disaster together-that day is not far.*

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