

## **Inaugural Free Heart Charity Mission to Pakistan**

**by**

**CardiacEye International Foundation**

CardiacEye International Foundation (CEIF), has focused on improving access to quality pediatric and adult cardiac care by helping cardiac programs in areas of need to make sustainable centers of excellence. We work in collaboration with our many dedicated medical volunteers from around the world (Australia, Chile, United Kingdom, Kenya United States and Pakistan), as well as other organizations, to provide free complex heart surgeries, training, mentoring, capacity building and accountability, opportunities that are designed to meet the inimitable needs of our partner sites.

Our work with partner sites involves building of clinical and organizational capability. Our phased support approach envisions promoting international growth and quality of cardiac surgery, particularly in children and adults. The gradual shift from previously sponsoring indigent children and young adults, as well as those without access, to undergo open-heart surgery in selected centers to recruiting and sponsoring open heart surgery teams to facilitate the development, support, or augmentation of similar teams in the host countries is our primary goal.



Since CEIF's formation in 2009, it, in addition to its planning for future missions, inaugurated its debut mission to Pakistan under the CEIF Pakistan Chapter. 57 patients both children and adults so far have undergone free open heart surgeries in two locations of medical facilities in Lahore, Pakistan. Onsite surgical missions (both solo and team efforts) have initiated, augmented, and updated its programs health visits, lectures, consultations and cooperative efforts all over the country.

CEIF Pakistan Chapter has committed to United Christian Hospital Lahore (UCH) to make it one of the free centers of excellence for cardiac services in Pakistan. CEIF with its donations from other partners is providing financial support to the charity program at UCH and over the next few years will work to implement the heart services program free of charge for all comers with congenital heart defects. The CEIF founder and the chairman Dr. Maqsood Elahi (A fellow of the ICS; ICS US Section Institutional Regent for Central Texas and a cardiothoracic surgeon) has performed over 50 adult and pediatric open heart operations within the last 3 months as well as many closed cardiac and thoracic procedures.



CEIF's core competency is promoting the development of clinical skills in a range of areas key to quality adult and pediatric cardiac care—diagnosis, treatment (surgical and interventional), post-operative care, and more recently, family education regarding post-hospital care. In this regard, CEIF along with US physicians has donated cardiovascular equipment to UCH Lahore worth half a million US dollars. The Foundation is working towards making UCH a completely state of the art cardiovascular services facility for both adults and children. CEIF in Sargodha, Pakistan is raising awareness about heart disease and ethics of heart surgery in the 21st Century. By facilitating training and mentoring partnerships between our partner sites CEIF is helping partner sites to build the clinical capacity of their programs, thereby improving the quality and accessibility of care for children and families.



After these free heart surgery programs currently underway in Pakistan, we can see great growth in the local staff. Dr. Maqsood Elahi is training local surgeons to develop abilities and be able to provide operations to children with simple defects during our team's absence. The UCH staff is becoming more comfortable with taking care of post-op pediatric cardiac patients, and a local physician was inspired to get his perfusion certification in USA.

The aim for the future is to continue with this programme of training missions and assisting Pakistani hospitals with the management of their complex cardiac patients free of charge. We work with our partner sites and volunteers to identify opportunities to support organizational capacity building activities like the (1) Full team cardiac training visits to our partner sites by CEIF volunteers to meet specialized skill developments; (2) local teamwork training and mentoring; (3) leadership and administrative systems development and distance learning systems developments. In addition to clinical skills, sustainability demands other types of skills and abilities. For example, a program's leadership vision and capability, its financial condition, organizational culture, and support systems such as fundraising are key to a free charity cardiac surgical program's ability to deliver quality care in Pakistan into the future.

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