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NEW DOCTORS PRACTISING IN SUNRISE HEALTH REGION

Access to physician services continues to improve for residents in communities all across Saskatchewan. New family doctors are now practising in Yorkton and area, thanks to the most recent results of the Saskatchewan International Physician Practice Assessment (SIPPA) program.

Dr. Pushpika Karunatilake (Yorkton) and Sanjeela Ghazal (Yorkton area) join many other International Medical Graduate (IMG) colleagues already practising in Saskatchewan. SIPPA is a unique made-in-Saskatchewan program that assesses IMGs on their education and clinical ability before allowing them to practise medicine. Since the program began in 2011, more than 190 new family physicians have completed the assessment and are currently practising in the province.

"We value internationally trained physicians, and we welcome them and their families to our province," Rural and Remote Health Minister Greg Ottenbreit said. "SIPPA is one of many ways we're making sure Saskatchewan residents get better access to physician care. In total, we now have over 750 more physicians practising today than we did in 2007."

In addition, a total of 14 international medical graduates from the January intake of SIPPA are now completing their field assessments. If successful, these family physicians will begin practising across the province this fall.

"Of particular note is that our most recent cohort has a significant increase in physicians recruited to rural practices," SIPPA Medical Director for the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan Dr. Jon Witt said. "This continues to be an important focus of the program and we are very pleased to help rural communities throughout Saskatchewan meet their health resource needs."

"The SIPPA graduates who are now practising in communities all over the province are an integral part of our growing physician work force," Saskdocs' CEO Erin Brady said. "These physicians, who are working alongside colleagues trained here at home and abroad, play an important role in the continuing work that health care teams deliver every day to the people of Saskatchewan."

In addition to attracting IMGs, Saskatchewan is making progress in keeping more locally-trained family medicine graduates in the province. The retention rate of family medicine graduates trained at the University of Saskatchewan has jumped over the past four years from 58 per cent to 93 per cent.

Physicians interested in working in Saskatchewan are encouraged to contact saskdocs directly at info@saskdocs.ca or call toll-free (in North America) 1-888-415-3627 or 306-933-5000.

For more information, contact:

James Winkel
Saskdocs
Saskatoon
Phone: 306-933-5094

Shirley Xie
Communications Branch
Saskatchewan Health
Regina
Phone: (306) 787-4083

Jennifer Thoma
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon
Phone: 306-966-1851