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NEW DOCTORS PRACTISING IN KELSEY TRAIL HEALTH REGION

Access to physician care continues to improve for patients in communities throughout Saskatchewan. New family doctors are now practising in Kelvington and Tisdale, thanks to the most recent results of the Saskatchewan International Physician Practice Assessment (SIPPA) program.

Dr. Milad Hanna (Kelvington) and Dr. Achraf Zakaria (Tisdale) are among 13 International Medical Graduates (IMGs) who have completed the most recent assessment and are starting practice in communities around the province. SIPPA is a unique made-in-Saskatchewan program that assesses IMGs on their education and clinical ability before allowing them to practise medicine in the province. Since the program began in 2011, almost 200 new family physicians have completed the assessment and are currently practising in the province.

"We welcome these new physicians and their families to Saskatchewan," Rural and Remote Health Minister Greg Ottenbreit said. "Thanks to SIPPA, people in rural, northern, and urban communities throughout the province have increased access to physician care. Due to the efforts of Saskdocs and other initiatives introduced by our government, in total we have 750 more doctors practising in Saskatchewan than we did 10 years ago."

In addition to those physicians who just completed their assessment, a further 13 IMGs are doing their field assessments. If successful, these family physicians will begin practising across the province this winter.

"SIPPA physicians are a critical component of Saskatchewan's family practice workforce," Medical Director of SIPPA for the College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan Dr. Jon Witt said. "In the past few years, many SIPPA physicians have been placed in difficult-to-fill family practice vacancies across Saskatchewan."

"The recruitment and retention of family physicians to rural and remote communities throughout the province remains one of our top priorities," Saskdocs' CEO Erin Brady said. "We continue to work with system partners on welcoming SIPPA graduates to our communities and medical practices, and look forward to seeing them work alongside local medical graduates as part of dynamic health care teams."

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.

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