

IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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NEW DOCTORS PRACTISING IN REGINA QU'APPELLE HEALTH REGION

Residents across Saskatchewan continue to benefit from better access to physician care. New family doctors are now practising in Fort Qu'Appelle, Indian Head, and Regina, thanks to the most recent results of the Saskatchewan International Physician Practice Assessment (SIPPA) program.

Dr. Hasantha Ovitigamuve (Fort Qu'Appelle), Dr. Samer Iskandar (Indian Head), and Dr. Azita Saremi (Regina) are among 14 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, 210 new family physicians have completed the assessment and are currently practising in the province.

"Internationally trained physicians play an important role in our health care system, and we welcome them to Saskatchewan," Health Minister Jim Reiter said. "Thanks to the SIPPA program, along with our other recruitment initiatives, we have over 750 more doctors practising today than we did 10 years ago."

In addition to those physicians who just completed their assessment, a further 14 IMGs are doing their field assessments. If successful, these family physicians will begin practising across the province this fall.

"SIPPA is very pleased to support Saskatchewan's need for physicians in communities across the province," Medical Director of SIPPA for the College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan Dr. Jon Witt said. "We are helping to create a sustainable physician workforce for Saskatchewan, while offering rural, regional/urban and emergency room experience to all candidates to support them in their future practice environment."

"We're very pleased to welcome these new physicians to the region," Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region Vice President, Integrated Health Services Karen Earnshaw said. "These new practitioners will help us to meet the increasing need for primary health care due to population growth and demographic change within the region, and better serve our patients in the right location at the right time. We thank the SIPPA program for its support of our ongoing regional recruiting efforts for primary care providers."

"Saskdocs is once again pleased to hear about all of the international medical graduates becoming part of the province's health care workforce," Saskdocs' CEO Erin Brady said. "These IMGs play an important role, as do their professional colleagues who all help to deliver high-quality, team-based care to the people of Saskatchewan, especially those living in rural and remote communities."

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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