

George Subraj-a man of true humanitarian qualities

Written by

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Medical science and technology in recent years has grown rapidly and has reached incredible levels surgery and medicinal treatment are available for many diseases and medical conditions which in not the too distant past were unavailable. Obesity is one of the prevalent medical conditions in the modern world and consequently heart diseases in many countries are on the upsurge, even among children, so the demand for paediatric surgery is on the increase. Obesity levels have been increasing rapidly worldwide for the past two decades. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has labeled it a global epidemic and a report released in 2006, revealed that for the first time ever, the number of overweight people in the world outnumber the world's hungry.

The population of the UK is not going against the trend. The WHO has estimated the UK to be among the most overweight countries in the world, and according to government figures, the UK is now the fattest country in Europe with one in four adults obese.

Obesity levels continue to rise within upcoming generations and if current trends continue, the forecast for the future health of today's children is bleak. In 2004, the House of Commons health committee reported that this could be the first generation where children die before their parents as a consequence of childhood obesity.

Between 1995 and 2005 the proportion of obese children aged two to 15 increased from 10.9% to 18% in boys, and from 12 to 18.1% in girls.

The problem is society-wide with almost equal numbers in boys and girls. A popular misconception is that obesity is an issue for poorer people, however a recent study has shown that childhood obesity is also endemic among the middle class.

It has been estimated that if current trends continue, one-fifth of boys and one-third of girls will be obese by 2020.

But while heart surgery facilities are widely available access to them is limited because of poverty and the high costs associated with such types of medical intervention. This is particularly evident in poor and developing countries like Guyana. However, the latter has made a big leap having established a cardiology centre (Caribbean Heart Institute-CHI) here and about two years ago history was created here when we had our first heart surgery done which was successful. Shortly after that we also had our first kidney transplant.

Against this backdrop it was indeed excellent news to hear that a team of medical professionals including cardiologists from the US is here for a historic first round of Paediatric Heart Surgeries to be conducted at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), in collaboration with the Caribbean Heart Institute (CHI),

Minister within the Ministry of Health, Dr. Bheri Ramsarran, said that the Guyanese medical communities as well as potential patients are really looking forward to this visit. He further added that he was extremely proud of the professionalism with which the team worked in coordinating such a large team and that medical history will be created in Guyana when this week of screenings and surgeries begin.

US-based Guyanese philanthropist, George Subraj must be commended for being very instrumental in having this medical team here.

It will be recalled that Subraj, was also instrumental in initiating Guyana's first Kidney Transplant almost two years ago and he said he has been in contact regularly with Dr. Gary Stephens of the CHI with the hope of having surgery of this nature done at home. "It has become a huge undertaking and a financial nightmare when our children, babies if I may, have to travel to far corners of the earth for those life-saving surgeries. I hope with this team's visit we can open the door wide enough to have the procedure done at home whenever it is required," Subraj offered.

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These are indeed very moving words, which demonstrate the true humanitarianism of the man. We certainly need more persons of his ilk to help reduce suffering among people.