



Shriners NEWS & NOTES

Shriners Hospitals Research Program To Emphasize Results

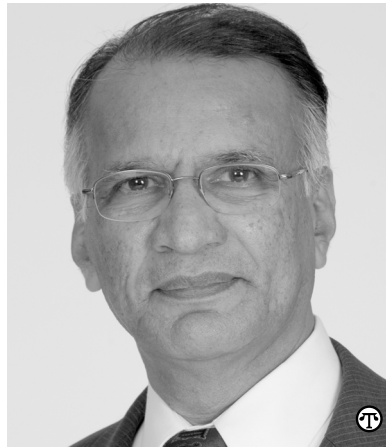
(NAPSA)—Shriners Hospitals for Children's Corporate Director of Research Programs Zakir Bengali, Ph.D., brings a new focus and energy to the organization's research efforts. Dr. Bengali, who came to Shriners Hospitals from the National Institutes of Health in June, is streamlining the program, making it more efficient and able to improve the lives of children more quickly.

"Even though research must be a painstakingly slow, deliberate process, we want to be able to move research from the laboratory bench to our patients' bedsides—or, from the theoretical to the practical—as quickly and efficiently as possible," Dr. Bengali said. However, it's important to understand the intricacies involved. For example, "The human hand alone is more complex than the space shuttle," Dr. Bengali said.

Commitment to Research

Shriners Hospitals' research program has internationally renowned scientists, as well as affiliations with several notable universities, including Harvard, McGill, University of Texas Medical Branch and the University of California. The ability to collaborate with outstanding university research faculties greatly enhances possibilities for Shriners' researchers. In addition, Shriners' clinical research efforts are strengthened by the work of outstanding, world-renowned orthopaedic and burns surgeons, as well as a unique patient population, which provides a wealth of knowledge and insight.

Shriners Hospitals' commitment to formal research has grown from an initial annual allo-



Zakir H. Bengali, Ph.D., previously a program officer for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is now responsible for oversight of Shriners Hospitals' \$37 million clinical and basic research program.

cation of \$12,000 in the 1960s to \$37 million for 2007. All 22 Shriners Hospitals for Children and the research centers are involved in research in some way, and more than 140 basic and clinical research projects are under way. These projects focus on pediatric orthopaedics, burn injuries, spinal cord injuries and cleft lip and palate.

Some research projects in process that may one day benefit children around the world include:

- Studying the effects of specific proteins in bone growth.
- Determining ways to control cell proliferation in both embryonic development and cancer.
- Learning how to enhance the central nervous system development process to optimize spinal cord and brain repair after a pediatric injury or illness.

- Following the effects of different treatments, with and without steroids, on patients with Duchenne muscular dystrophy to determine which treatment best maintains their ability to walk.

- Evaluating the effectiveness of propranolol, a medication for high blood pressure, in decreasing the resting heart rate of burned patients. A decrease would give the body an opportunity to rest, and therefore lessen the loss of muscle mass, restore fat mass and decrease overload on cardiac and skeletal muscles.

Decades of Success

Shriners Hospitals have been leaders in pediatric orthopaedic and burn research for the past three decades, significantly adding to the progress that has been made by:

- Developing cultured skin and improved wound-healing techniques for severe burns.

- Developing effective treatments for X-linked hypophosphatemia and for osteogenesis imperfecta.

- Refining the use of functional electrical stimulation to help some children with spinal cord injuries, as well as those with cerebral palsy, to stand, walk and use their hands more effectively.

- Discovering that a mutation in the gene for fibrillin causes Marfan syndrome.

- Improving the survival rate and quality of life for persons with severe burns.

"Research, with its ability to improve lives, is the most exciting job one can have," Dr. Bengali said. "We are living in the Golden Age of medical research; breathtaking discoveries are being made every day."