



Ontario Konkani Association

e-Samachar (Feb 2024)

www.ontariokonkanis.com

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President's Message

Namaskaru OKA Kutumb,

We hope you are thoroughly enjoying the weather which is mixture of winter and spring this year!

After a gap of six months, eSamachar is back. The first in this term. In this month's e-Samachar, we have introduced our leads for each section. Niranjan Kamath has written about Punganur Cows. In the Senior's corner, Sadanand Mankikar has written about Seniors' Forum structure, activities, as well as provided great information on other useful events and relevant information for seniors. He has also written about Long Term Care facilities. Priya Prabhu has written about her Travel Chronicles Episode 3, Veena Shanbhag has written about the Supplements/Vitamins for people with Diabetes. At Kids' corner, Aditi has penned down a cosmic fable about Ganapathi's tooth and Changing Moon.

We also have community achievement section about Dr. Abhaya Kulkarni and Miss. Mridvika Malebennur.

The year started with KPL- Konkani Premier League, Jalsa – Navaratri celebrations, Deepotsav – Carnival of lights, our 35th Coral Diwali celebrations. We released a Konkani movie TARPANA. We also had a successful new event OKA Sports Day. The upcoming event is Pooja Parab – where we have planned to combine Shree Satyanarayana Pooja and Ugadi celebrations with Keli Paan Jevan as a cherry on the cake. More information will follow.

We do hope you enjoy this edition of e-Samachar. Please write to okapresidents@gmail.com with articles or suggestions.

Rachana Kamath and Vikram Prabhu!

eSamachar Committee

eSamachar is our monthly magazine which comprises different sections and makes sure it keeps you up-to-date with the community related achievements, some culture related articles by great enthusiasts, some things for kids, some health-related articles, senior forum updates, food/travel blogs etc. Let us all meet the section leads! All the enthusiasts out there, reach out to us/section leads if you want to submit articles under any section.



Niranjan Kamath
Lead, Culture Section

My name is Niranjan Kamath and I have been in Canada for many years. Over these many years I have come to realize how important it is to connect with all Amchigelles here. This has been the premise on which our Association in Ontario has grown to over 500 families. I have a deep interest in our culture, our traditions and rituals. I have been writing on these caveats in our eSamachar regularly. E Samachar to me is the literary thread that binds our highly educated and multi talented Konkani community.

Sadanand Mankikar
Lead, Seniors' Forum

Sadanand along with Suvarna has been a long time Life Member of OKA and they were Presidents in 2004-2005. Between 2010 and 2015, each year, Sadanand conducted Communication and Leadership Workshops for the youth. In 2016 he started the OKA Seniors' Forum and in 2018 he formed the SVBF/OKA Health Awareness Working Group. Since then he has organized around 40 seminars, webinars, and workshops on various socio-cultural topics. Sadanand has been a regular contributor to e-Samachar. He enjoys writing and disseminating information of interest to the seniors.



Priya Prabhu
Lead, Food/Travel Blog



Hello all, this is Priya Prabhu, currently based in Toronto and looking to bring some refreshing travel and scrumptious food articles to you all. I work in Information Technology and besides that, I like to bake, read, paint and travel. As for writing; I started off with kids corner articles for local newspapers and then moved to being the college magazine editor for one academic year. Through the past years, I have been blogging or creating travel plans for people. I am happy to serve our OKA community with my love for writing and narrating stories or experiences. I also look forward to collaborating with other writers in our community who wish to come forward and write or share their memories in the food or travel space for eSamachar.

Veena Shanbhag
Lead, Health Section

I am a Pharmacist by profession working in a community pharmacy. I am passionate about how lifestyle such as eating, exercise and sleep habits can make a big impact on our health. I am also a Certified Diabetes Educator and a Certified Yoga Instructor. This helps me dive deeper into understanding the impact of lifestyle choices patients make and how we can work together for them to reach their health goals. I'm excited to be a member of the eSamachar team and to contribute to the Health section



Aditi Wagle
Lead, Kids Corner



I'm Aditi Wagle. I work as a senior analyst at Scotiabank. Outside of work, I like to pursue artistic endeavours. I'm a student of Hindustani classical music, currently under the wing of Guru Sri Koushik Aithal. When it comes to creativity, my heart finds joy in Indian traditional art, like Gond, Kalamkari, Madhubani, Warli. Recently I have also dabbled in digital art, expanding my canvas from paper to the digital realm. Now the exciting part - I'm taking a humble step in creating cute comics and stories, to bring smiles to the little faces in our OKA community through my art, a task that both thrills and humbles me.

Mission Punganur

By Niranjana Kamath



Why am I talking about cows? Well, these are not merely Cows. These are Punganur Cows the sweetest and cutest bovine animals around. You will know more as you read on why I am writing on these Cows.

Standing at just around 70-90 cm tall and weighing less than 200kgs, Punganur dwarf cattle, which originated from the Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh, is one of the world's smallest humped cattle breeds and by far the sweetest and cutest bovine animals around. Compare this to the mighty Ongole Cow which stands at 1.7 meters and weighs about one thousand pounds.

This breed is named after the town of its origin, Punganur in the district of Chittoor in AP. The cow yields only 3 to 5 liters of milk but is loaded with 8.5% of fat and medicinal properties like many other indigenous cows.

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has about two hundred Punganur cows in its cattle-yards amongst hundreds of Ongole and Gir Cows (Desi Cows). The world famous Tirupati Laddu does contain the Ghee prepared from the milk of these cows

is being used in 'archana' (offering) for Lord Venkateswara. Punganur cow's milk is used for ksheera abhishekam in Thirupathi for Venkateswara swami. The ghee of Punganur cows is used for making the famous Tirupathi temple laddu. The darshan of this cow itself is very sacred.

Like many indigenous breeds, the Punganur cattle also faced an existential threat due to the push for an increase in milk production and farmers' income. Back in the seventies and eighty's when there was very controversial decision taken to bring in Holstein and Jersey cows into the country. The goal was to blindly increase the milk output. What the policy makers at the time failed to understand was that this would be the death knell for our hardy Desi Cows. Incidentally, this was also the pivotal year, after which the incidence of Diabetes and Cardiovascular events exponentially increased.

Compared to hybrid cows, which are capable of producing milk several times more than indigenous ones, the Punganur cattle suddenly became a liability for farmers who started abandoning them. It got so bad that at one point the known number of Punganur cattle had dropped below 50.

But thanks to some conservation efforts they are slowly making a comeback. Several cow sheds in the state and the Andhra Government embarked on a mission to revive their population. In 2020, the Andhra Government had launched **Mission Punganur** for the conservation of the breed.

Many motivated scientists and policy makers in the AP Government worked tirelessly to resurrect Punganur cattle through In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) method. Scientists were forced to take the surrogacy route as there was a scarcity of healthy

and graded Punganur cows that could produce offspring. The mission has set the aim to increase reproductive efficiency by three to four times. The research is being carried out by the Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University (SVVU).

The project envisages the production of at least 8.5 off-springs from each cow in five years compared to 2.5 off-springs during the same period from each cow under normal circumstances. A total of 1,690 offspring are expected to be produced from two hundred superior donors.

The main purpose of the mission is to restore the Punganur cow breed by using embryo transfer technology through IVF. In January 2021, the Animal Husbandry Department has reported that the first IVF calf of the Punganur breed was born in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. Today there are hundreds of Punganur Cows in the region and if you see them, I am certain you will want them.

I strongly urge you to watch the video attached to this article to get more details of our Own Punganur Cows.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtWoF1B8bT4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ll023eCxDJw>

Seniors Forum

By Sadanand Mankikar

STRUCTURE:

Following a seminar “I am a senior now, what next?” at the Konkani Sammelan in Atlanta, Georgia in July 2016, a brainstorming session on October 22, 2016 and a Focus Group meeting on April 23, 2017 the following nine Teams consisting of over 25 volunteers were established:

1. OKA Aadhar Chat - Interactive forum for seniors and support
2. Resource page on OKA website:
3. Information sessions/workshops/seminars/webinars:
4. Social and Cultural Activities:
5. Technical Support
6. Carpool: Coordinator
7. Buddy System
8. Emergency Preparedness Program
 - Eventuality/Survivor’s Kits/End of Life Planning
 - Emergency Preparedness:
 - East End Support
 - West End Support
 - Medical and Non-medical Information Access
 - Youth/Young Adult Communication/ Coordination
9. Retirement Community

ACTIVITIES:

Thus far, as listed in the following table, we have organized or participated in over 50 Focus Groups, Information Sessions, Workshops, Seminars, Webinars on various health, social and cultural issues. In addition, some of the members actively participated in various external initiatives/activities including Asti Visarjan Project, Ontario Seniors' Affairs Minister's initiative, Healthy Aging in Diverse Ontario, Ontario Seniors' Affairs Minister's initiative, Liberal Caucus Indian Friendship Group Meeting, Indus Community Services' South Asian Housing Needs discussion, GTA RetCom Project (a number of meetings and updates including initial feasibility studies and readiness discussions and Jeevan Niwas South Asian Retirement Village (Information Session and Ground breaking Ceremonies).

OKA Seniors' Forum has an account in the First Ontario Credit Union, Burlington Branch with Ashok Bhatt, Sadanand Mankikar and Muralidhar Nayak as signing authorities.

MODE OF COMMUNICATION

OKA members are kept informed of the Forum activities through OKA website, e-Samachar and OKA Seniors email group.

USEFUL INFORMATION

OKA EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM: Estate, Will and Power of Attorney and End of Life Planning are two major elements of this OKA Seniors Forum Program.

For **preparing Wills and Powers of Attorney** you may contact Marvin Talksby (905) 405-0199 ext. 257 or Mary Bojkovski (905) 405-0199 ext. 276 of Nanda & Associate Lawyers. For additional information or assistance, you may also contact Raghunath Kamath or Ashok Bhatt.

For **End of Life Planning** one may contact Harjinder Bilku of Chapel Ridge Funeral Home at (905) 305-8128 or (647) 966-0093.

For additional information about OKA Seniors' Forum please use the following link:
<https://ontariokonkanis.com/seniors-forum-epp2/>

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

INDUS COMMUNITY SERVICES: This organization provides very helpful service to South Asian seniors.

For the presentations and additional information, please visit <https://www.induscs.ca/seniorstownhall/>

If you want to stay connected with Indus, you may sign up for their newsletter.

C.A.R.P. Are you a member of C.A.R.P. – previously known as Canadian Association of Retired Persons? If you are over 45, you may want to consider becoming a member of C.A.R.P. It is a national organization with chapters all over the country. Its mission is to “Promote and protect the interests, rights and quality of life of Canadians as we age”

C.A.R.P. is an advocacy group and from time to time they arrange interesting and informative seminars and workshops. Their monthly magazine Zoomer consists of useful articles and provide information on topics related to insurance, travel, health, entertainment and lifestyle.

For additional information, you may contact them by email: support@carp.ca

Phone: 1-833-211-2277 Website: www.carp.ca

ONTARIO GUIDE TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR SENIORS: Please click on the following link for the latest upgraded guide. [A guide to programs and services for seniors.](#)

SENIORS HOUSING AND HOME CARE DIRECTORY: Help for Mom has developed this very helpful publication which is about 130 pages, softcover and Readers Digest size. To get a copy send an email to helpformom.com or call Mary (647) 967-9821.

The following organizations disseminate very useful information either through regular news release and/or seminars, webinars and workshops:

- Canada India Foundation www.canadaindiafoundation.com
- C.A.R.P. Canadian Association of Retired People) www.carp.ca
- Diabetes Canada www.diabetes.ca
- Indus Community Services www.induscs.ca
- UHNF (University Network Foundation) www.uhnfoundatiom.ca

GOLDEN RULES FOR AGING GRACEFULLY

- 1. Live in your own place to enjoy independence and privacy.**
- 2. Hold on to your bank deposits and assets with yourself or your spouse.**
- 3. Don't depend only on your children's promise to care for you when you grow old as their priorities change with time.**
- 4. Expand your circle of friends to include those who will outlive you.**
- 5. Do not compare; expect nothing from others.**
- 6. Do not meddle in the life of your children. Let them live THEIR life not yours.**
- 7. Do not use old age as your shield and justification to demand care, respect and attention.**
- 8. Listen to what others say but think and act independently.**
- 9. Pray but do not beg even from God. Seek His Grace.**
- 10. And finally, DO NOT RETIRE FROM LIFE.**

Source Unknown

ARTICLES BY AND/OR FOR SENIORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME.

Long Term Care

By Sadanand Mankikar

Long Term Care (LTC) is a key component of the publicly funded healthcare system in Ontario. However, due to poor publicity and education, most Ontario residents have little understanding of what LTC includes and how to access it. Many use the words Long Term Care or Nursing Home synonymously with Retirement home, however these are vastly different in their operations and in the populations, they serve. LTC serves seniors with complex health needs who require full personal support and nursing services 24/7. Retirement homes serve individuals who may require greater support or assistance in certain aspect of living but for the most part can function independently.

Unlike retirement homes, LTC is publicly funded, meaning all Ontarians over the age of 18 are eligible to be apart of the system regardless of income level. This is a key element most individuals are not aware of. It is crucial to start the application process as early as possible to ensure your loved one get access to the care they require to sustain their quality of life. In order to begin the process, you need to speak with your Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSS). There are 14 different HCCSS throughout Ontario and each HCCSS has a care coordinator who would support you in completing the application, and assess your loved one to determine if they qualify for LTC. In addition, your loved one will be placed on the waitlist of 5 LTC homes of your choice. Once the LTC home informs you of an open bed, the spot will be held for 24 hours. After this time and if you decide you do not want the bed, your loved one will be placed at the bottom of the waitlist. It is

imperative to begin the process early when you first notice signs of cognitive or physical deterioration as the waiting time can range from 6 months up to 2 years.

As mentioned, every Ontarian over the age of eighteen is eligible to be apart of the LTC system regardless of income level. Within LTC there are 3 types of accommodations: Basic, Semi-private and Private. The rates are \$1986.82 (Basic), \$2395.32 (Semi-private) and \$2838.49 (Private) respectively. However, if by your notice of assessment, it is deemed that your loved one cannot afford the full basic rate, there is a rate reduction process. The amount your loved one can afford will be calculated with the remainder being subsidized by the government.

The designated monthly rate includes 24/7 complete personal and nursing services including nutrition, physiotherapy, and in-house recreational activities. There are additional services such as hairdressing, podiatry, external recreational activities and much more that do cost extra and are usually supported via a resident trust account.

The LTC system is crucial to support our population and ensure those who are unable to take care of themselves continue to have a high quality of life. Some early signs of decline to look out for in your loved one:

- Unable to do routine tasks (getting out of bed, getting dressed, bathing, eating, etc.)
- Lack of coordination-consistent falling, lack of balance/stability when moving
- Confusion and/or forgetfulness when completing tasks
- Medical Appointments- frequent and necessary visits to hospital or doctor
- Caregiving is taking a significant toll on you

Once again it is crucial to start the process early as soon as you notice any signs of deterioration in your loved one. As a community, we all want our elderly population to be well cared for.

Jordan Kannampuzha, Chief Operating Officer, ATK Care Group Ltd.

(Jordan K had given a short presentation on Long Term Care at the SVBF/OKA Senior's Day held on June 25, 2023. A few attendees had asked for additional information. Jordan was kind enough to submit the above article)

The Travel Chronicles Episode 3 - Curacao

By Priya Prabhu

Hello everyone. After my first two Travel Chronicles with London UK and Prague, I am back with a fresh new travel article for you all.

One of my escapades to our neighboring countries down South took me to the Caribbeans, to be precise to the beautiful island country of Curacao. Now what have I heard or read about Curacao you ask? All I could think of was the bright blue syrup named “Curacao Blue” sold by Mapro back in India. Curacao is a Dutch island and belongs to the Royal Dutch Kingdom. Most people are multilingual with Dutch, Spanish, English and a language unique to them called ‘Papiamentu’. Most of the locals we met told us that they do get incentives and scholarships to study in the Netherlands which they do opt for. But most Islanders return back to Curacao because in their own words - ‘Once an islander, always an islander’.

Day 1

So here we were. Flying from Toronto to Curacao takes about five hours. As soon as the flight was close to the coast, the blue waters of the sea left me mesmerized. This was indeed the real “Curacao Blue”. Now it all made sense.

My friend and I, who were traveling together, had decided to pick a car from a car rental at the airport. Renting a car is the best way to get around the island and highly recommended. We had booked a little airbnb in the Jan Thiel area. The host lived in the house next door. So, getting anything and asking for information was easy. We did a quick electricity meter reading and decided to step out and explore the popular Jan Thiel area of Curacao.

Jan Thiel’s most loved Mambo beach is a wonderful swimmer’s paradise with resorts, shops, tanning beds and plenty of seafood and other food options to choose from. A must try while in Curacao is the Red snapper grilled or fried. The cuisine is heavily Creole influenced with Creole spices being used in most dishes.

Day 2

We decided to drive to the northernmost tip of the island to Klein Knip and Grotte Knip. Clear blue waters and snorkeling with gentle turtles swimming is what one can expect here. This is true Curacao "Island slow life" as the locals say.

In the evening we decided to explore the colourful Petermaai district of Curacao. Colourful houses and restaurants welcomed us. We strolled around the area to see many clubs and pubs too. Islanders take their night life very seriously!

Day 3

On our third day, officially called the beach day, we decided to drive to a beautiful beach called -Cas Abao. Locals in Curacao swear by this beach. I understood why. Less touristy, more white sands, crystal clear water and plenty of beach tan beds to relax. Cas Abao was indeed worth the drive. Having asked a lot of locals, we decided to lunch at Jaanchie's restaurant. We were greeted by the friendly owner -I call Uncle Jaanchie. He was kind enough to gift my friend and I two little embroidered coin purses, which I treasure as a fond memory of this island and its people. There is no learning that can replace being in a new place and among new people and listening to their stories.

Most afternoons we took a quick break back at our airbnb to cool down or snooze. Evening we went around Santa Barbara beach for a short stroll. Again, we'd heard from locals that having dinner at the Pirate Bay was a tradition as we decided to go ahead with it. Pirate Bay restaurant was like a dream. Soft sand below our feet, little shacks and eating some dinner listening to the waves of the sea. Absolutely dreamy and something I would definitely recommend.

Day 4

Since this was our last day, we decided to explore the main city of Willemstad. This is pretty much the capital of Curacao and a place buzzing with locals and tourists. We decided to pick some souvenirs and relax during the day. Evening is when Willemstad lights up. The beautiful Emma bridge is a joy to walk on. There were many boats and cruises around the harbour. We decided to hop several places to

check out the nightlife in Willemstad. We stopped by at several cafes with live bands and danced like there's no tomorrow. Since we were in the Caribbeans, I wasn't going to go back without eating some plantain! As a true Konkani, I LOVE my plantain. We tried the local plantain stew, cassava chips and some Curacao Blue cocktails. The lively atmosphere, the fireworks in the sky and Caribbean food. What more can one ask for?

Day 5

On our last day, we checked out of our airbnb. Our little home on the island which endured all the sand we got from the beaches! We tidied up and headed to the airport. Besides Curacao blue liquor, rum is popularly produced here. A unique rum I noticed in shops was banana rum.

A few additional tips for a visit to Curacao - Some people opt to take a full day ferry to Klein Curacao; a small island off the mainland. I would recommend this for snorkeling or swimming in general if you have an extra day. If you like hiking you could visit the Christoffelpark which is a national park in Curacao. A few resorts offer some beach excursions or snorkeling and diving experiences.

All in all, a fun island which is rather unique due to its Dutch European identity.



At Willemstad, Curacao



Willemstad Harbour from Emma Bridge, Curacao.



Cas Abao, Curacao



Plantain Stew, rice, salad and Curacao blue cocktail.

Supplements/Vitamins for people with Diabetes

By Veena Shanbhag - Pharmacist, Certified Diabetes Educator

Diabetes is a chronic medical condition that is treated with various medications. Sometimes the condition of diabetes can cause health issues that may benefit from vitamin supplementation. Some diabetic medications may cause depletion of certain vitamins and patients would benefit by taking these vitamins as a supplement.

Below are some of the vitamins that would help people with diabetes.

Vitamin B12 or cyanocobalamin

Over time, high blood sugar levels can cause nerve damage especially under the feet and in the hands, also known as diabetic neuropathy. This can be painful and the symptoms can be worsened by a vitamin B12 deficiency.

Metformin, a common medication used to treat diabetes can also cause vitamin B12 deficiency.

Vitamin B12 is found naturally in fish, dairy, meat and eggs. It can also be taken as a pill.

Vitamin C or ascorbic acid

In type 2 diabetes, there is insulin resistance which means that the insulin being formed in the body is not utilized efficiently by the cells. Vitamin C has been shown to reduce insulin resistance and better utilization of endogenous insulin.

This has shown improvement in the HbA1C levels.

Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits, tomatoes, strawberry and in certain vegetables like cauliflower, broccoli and brussel sprouts. It can also be supplemented as a pill.

Vitamin D3 or cholecalciferol

The deficiency of this vitamin can worsen insulin resistance and lead to onset of type 2 diabetes. Vitamin D helps to reduce inflammation which is a major process by which insulin resistance occurs.

Vitamin D is formed by the skin when it is exposed to sunlight. It is also found in fish, dairy products and meat. It can be easily supplemented as a pill.

Chromium

Chromium is a mineral that is essential for carbohydrate and fat metabolism. Chromium supplementation may lower triglycerides and increase HDL cholesterol (the good cholesterol) however there is limited data on this. There is also limited data on the long-term benefit and safety of chromium supplementation.

Chromium is found in trace amounts in brewer's yeast, meats and grains.

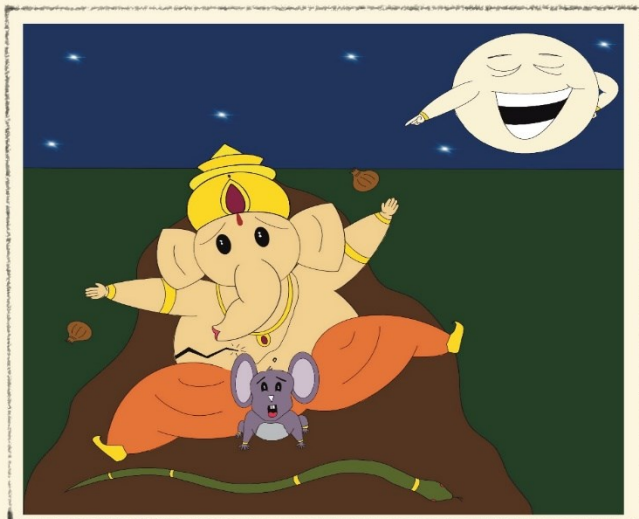
Discuss with your doctor and/or registered dietitian to find out which vitamin is appropriate for you. A blood test would help determine what dose you may need especially for vitamin B12 and for vitamin D.

Ganapati's Tooth and the Changing Moon: A Cosmic Fable



Once upon a time, it was Ganapati's birthday, and his loving mother, Parvati, had prepared a grand feast to celebrate. After enjoying a hearty meal and feeling quite full, Ganapati hopped onto his trusty mouse friend, Mooshaka, for the journey home.

As they were riding along, Mooshaka spotted a snake slithering across the road, and fear seized him. He lost his balance, causing Ganapati to tumble from his ride. Along with Ganapati, all the delicious snacks he had been munching on his way home scattered around, and he even got a small crack on his tummy. Though Ganapati felt embarrassed, he was relieved that no one had witnessed his fall. He swiftly gathered his scattered treats and secured his tummy with the snake.



Unbeknownst to Ganapati, the radiant and beautiful moon, Chandra, had been watching the whole embarrassing incident. Chandra couldn't help but burst into loud laughter. Ganapati, now feeling humiliated and angry, warned Chandra to stop laughing, but Chandra's mirth continued unabated.

In a fit of anger, Ganapati broke one of his own teeth and flung it toward Chandra, who trembled with fear and quickly begged for forgiveness. In his fury, Ganapati also placed a curse upon Chandra, decreeing that he would vanish from the sky, and his beauty would no longer be admired by anyone. Deeply humiliated, Chandra offered sincere apologies to Ganapati.



Ganapati, the embodiment of forgiveness, chose to show mercy. He decreed that the moon would undergo cycles of waxing and waning, a representation of both his forgiveness and the universal process of learning from one's errors. The moon, filled with remorse, embraced its altered destiny. This tale serves as a timeless lesson, emphasizing the repercussions of mocking others and the importance of treating everyone with kindness and respect.

COMMUNITY ACHIEVERS

Here is the proud moment for all in our OKA community. Dr. Abhaya Kulkarni –

Son of Mrs. Maya Vivek Kulkarni & Late Vivek N. Kulkarni; grandson of Paternal grandparents - Late Mrs. Vimla & Late Narayan Ganpatrao Kulkarni; Maternal grandparents - Late Mrs. Durgabai and Late Bhalchandra Venkatrao Masurkar has been appointed Surgeon-in-Chief & Chief of Perioperative Services for The Hospital for Sick Children Toronto. We congratulate Maya Kulkarni and (in-laws) Kishore Hemmadi & Mangala Hemmadi on Dr. Abhaya's success and wish him the best in his future endeavours.

Announcement from Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) President & CEO is attached below:

From: SickKids President & CEO

Sent: Thursday, February 8, 2024 4:11:56 p.m.

Subject: Announcement | Dr. Abhaya Kulkarni appointed Surgeon-in-Chief & Chief of Perioperative Services

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to announce that the SickKids Board of Trustees has approved the appointment of our incoming Surgeon-in-Chief and Chief of Perioperative Services, Dr. Abhaya Kulkarni.



His appointment is effective April 8, 2024, following the retirement of Dr. Jim Drake from this role in April.

After conducting an extensive international search for this prominent position, it turned out we didn't have to look very far. Abhaya has been an integral part of the SickKids family since he joined the organization as a Staff Neurosurgeon in 2003 and, through 20 tremendous years at SickKids, he has proved himself multiple times over to be a gifted and trusted physician, researcher, educator and leader.

Since coming to SickKids, Abhaya has been a rising star who seeks out new responsibilities and roles. His current appointments include: Associate Chief of Surgery/Perioperative Services at SickKids; Senior Scientist at SickKids' Research Institute; Professor and Vice-Chair of Culture & Inclusion in the Division of Neurosurgery at the University of Toronto (U of T); Lead Neurosurgeon for the Ontario Fetal Centre; Professor of Surgery at U of T's Faculty of Medicine; and he also holds the Garry Hurvitz Chair in Developmental Neurosurgery at SickKids.

Abhaya is also devoted to research, which centres on clinical trials, health outcomes, and quality of life in paediatric neurosurgery. He holds over US\$12 million in current U.S. National Institutes of Health Principal Investigator funding and has published 270-plus peer-reviewed manuscripts in such journals as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *JAMA*, and *The Lancet*. Through the years, he has also served on the editorial boards of *Neurosurgery* and *Journal of Neurosurgery: Pediatrics*.

From 2010 to 2020, he was Residency Program Director for U of T's Department of Neurosurgery, one of the largest neurosurgical training programs in the world, and presently oversees education for Perioperative Services at SickKids.

Abhaya has extensive leadership training and experience. He has received formal leadership instruction from U of T and Harvard University and served as a Director for the American Board of Pediatric Neurosurgery, the Accreditation Council of Pediatric Neurosurgery Fellowships, and the executive board of the American Society of Pediatric Neurosurgery. He exhibits our corporate values and inclusion is particularly close to his heart, as demonstrated through his leadership of the U of T Neurosurgery Culture and Inclusion initiative, and participation in the university's EDI Committee. In addition, he has mentored junior medical students in the U of T Diversity Mentorship Program and taken the San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training.

These are only the highlights. As the new SickKids Surgeon-in-Chief and Chief of Perioperative Services, it's safe to say we can expect much more to come from Abhaya as he makes this role his own and builds on his most impressive career. Please join me in congratulating Abhaya and wishing him well on his continuing journey with us at SickKids.

Warm regards,

Ronni



Dr. Ronald D. Cohn, FACMG
President & CEO

Professor, Department of Paediatrics and Molecular Genetics,
University of Toronto
Senior Scientist, The Hospital for Sick Children

The Hospital for Sick Children
555 University Ave, Toronto ON M5G 1X8

MRIDVIKA MALEBENNUR

SINGER

Profile

From her tender age of four, Mridvika Malebennur has been deeply engaged with the rich traditions of North Indian Classical Music, also known as Hindustani music. Her musical journey began under the nurturing guidance of Guru Panditaji in the Sultanate of Oman, evolving further with Guru Bhagyashree in Oman and then with Guru Vandana Vishwas in Mississauga, Canada. Since 2017, Mridvika has been elevating her craft in the advanced music program at the Shankar Mahadevan Academy, under the expert mentorship of Guru Chaitra Sontakke.



With nearly two decades of rigorous musical training, Mridvika has blossomed into a vocalist of remarkable talent and emotive depth. Her performances resonate with her dedication and passion, enchanting audiences with their emotional richness and the sheer aesthetic of her vocal prowess. She possesses the remarkable skill of intricately weaving musical notations into complex yet captivating soundscapes.

Her exceptional talent has not gone unnoticed. Mridvika has had the privilege of performing before legends of Indian music such as Shankar Mahadevan, Shreya Ghoshal, Vishal Dadlani, Kaushiki Chakraborty, Rahul Deshpande and Zakir Hussain. Mridvika's distinctive vocal style, alongside her adeptness in mastering complex musical notations and the artful techniques of Hindustani music, has earned her acclaim and accolades from esteemed personalities such as the award-winning lyricist Jayant Kaikini and the celebrated music maestro Shankar Mahadevan. Her musical journey is included in the records of World Online Music Competitions Organization (WOMCO) Lifetime Achievement Awards.

Accomplishments

- Gold Award | Canadian International Music Competition | 2024
- 1st Runner Up | Mere Sung Gaa | 2023
- Featured in the Saregama Openstage YT Channel, which was distributed to Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube, etc. | 2023
- Platinum Award | Beethoven International Music Competition | 2023
- Platinum Award | Best Classical Musicians International Competition | 2023
- Grand Prize | New York Classical Music Competition | 2023
- Special Mention | American International Music Competition | 2023
- Finalist | London Music International Competition | 2023
- 1st Runner-Up | MBM Idol | 2018
- Winner | Rising Star of Toronto- Solo Vocalist | 2017



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Vinayak Kamath
Home Financing Advisor

Unit R119
5100 Erin Mills Parkway
Mississauga, ON
Canada L5M 4Z5

hfa.scotiabank.com/VKamath
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Ashwin Shenoy
LLQP Ontario License 23216947

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Sun Life

Manoj Dcunha
Advisor, Sun Life

1637 Hollywell Avenue
Mississauga ON L5N 4R4

Tel: (647) 537-8273
Manoj.Dcunha@sunlife.com
sunlife.ca/Manoj.Dcunha

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