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## UICC honors Dr. Barry Bloom for distinguished service

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L-R: Dr Martin Mackay, President Global R&D, Pfizer; Dr Barry R. Bloom; Karun Rishi, President, USA-India Chamber of Commerce

NEW YORK: Dr. Barry R. Bloom, a medical education pioneer in India, was presented with Distinguished Services Award by the USA-India Chamber of Commerce for his longstanding and deep commitment to help improve public health and biomedical science in India; his scientific contributions to immunology, leprosy and tuberculosis; and his passion for educating the next generation of Indian scientists and scholars.

The award was presented by Dr. Martin Mackay, President Global R&D, Pfizer and Karun Rishi, President, USA-India Chamber of Commerce in the presence of over 300 industry, investment and academic leaders.

Dr. Barry R. Bloom is Harvard University Distinguished Service Professor and the former Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health.

At the award ceremony, Rishi said Dr. Bloom's involvement with India goes back to 1969 when he first visited India. "The journey never stopped and for over 40 years Dr. Barry Bloom continued his passion and commitment to help train whole generation of immunologists at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). Recently he helped establish Public Health Foundation of India a unique public private initiative to create world class school's of public health in India. We come across such a gifted personality once in our lifetime."

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Bloom commented about India making enormous progress in health care. Giving a series of statistics, he said, life expectancy in India for men today is 62 years and women 64 years compared to an average life expectancy of 25 years in 1900. The Indian government provides vaccines to 85% children but has not been able to wipe out polio. India ranks 49 in mortality under age five. 46% children under five are moderately or severely underweight; 1 in 70 women in India will die in delivery; non communicable diseases account for just over 50 % of deaths between ages 30 and 59; average age of first heart attack is 45 years; India has among the lowest expenditure on health- 5% of GDP; Some 70% of healthcare cost are from out of pocket expenses- the least efficient way to purchase health and the most regressive way. "India has long way to go but enormous progress has been made," he stated.

Dr. Bloom was sent to India in the late 60s to create the first course in immunology at the prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). After becoming dean at the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH), he said he felt like giving back to India.

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With an aim to creating a health system, infrastructure and focus on public health and disease prevention, he helped in the formation of the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), which has taken a leadership role in creating schools of public health in India.

Dr. Bloom stated that one of the most impressive things in India is its incredible creative range of public private partnerships with the high quality high throughput model, where there are paying patients on one side and poor patients on the other, both getting the best possible care at hospitals like Apollo, Narayana Hrudayalaya and the upcoming Medicity, "This is a kind of unique model. I don't know anywhere in the world that this kind of model has been developed," he said.

However, that model of high tech surgery and high quality institutions is not going to change public health statistics in India, he pointed out.

Dr. Bloom praised the work done by institutions and initiatives like the Health Management Research Institute, Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and ASHA.

Dr. Bloom stressed the need to worry about three functions: Health prevention, healthcare and health security.

"Fifty percent of deaths worldwide are behavioral, like smoking," he said. "Here, you don't need pills but changes in the lifestyle and behavior. Public health schools in the US can be helpful in training, capacity building and leadership development to make real difference in India."

Dr. Bloom said that in 1971 he had taught 28 students in the first course in immunology in India. In 1996, when the International Congress in Immunology was held in India for the first time, there were 3000 Indian immunologists participating, which was enormously gratifying, Dr Bloom said.