

A Year in Review

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Strong voices for public health

Sheela Basrur Centre launches a new direction: a focus on communications and leadership

Dr. Sheela Basrur's legacy of change is at the heart of all Sheela Basrur Centre (SBC) activities. The SBC Advisory Council recognized how Dr. Basrur's incredible skills and ability to communicate complex public health issues played into her success. One of her remarkable achievements was her ability to communicate information in a way that all could understand. The Council also noted the ongoing need to communicate effectively about current and emerging public health issues. As such, the Centre's new programming will focus on communication and leadership.

Public health professionals and agencies work every day to protect and promote the health of Ontarians, striving to prevent health problems before they occur. Public health professionals act quickly to contain infection or health hazards and they educate people about their health and how to promote wellbeing. They look at the many factors affecting our health. No matter the issue, communications is a critical public health tool.

The Sheela Basrur Centre will work with public health students, professionals and agencies to develop and reinforce effective communication skills to not only tell the public health story, but also to promote health and protect the public. »





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To achieve its new vision – clear, reliable, and timely public health communication – the Centre will offer a number of outreach programs to help practitioners feel more confident and prepared to engage the media and the public.

In 2012–2013, the SBC will launch two new programs: media training and the Don Low Communications Fellowship. Partnering with the Science Media Centre of Canada and Public Health Ontario, the SBC offered its first full-day media training workshop in November 2012 to public health professionals from all over Ontario. This interactive workshop brought together renowned journalists and media experts to help public health professionals better understand how the media think and operate. Participants received hands-on experience on how to craft messages so that they can get their key points across in a way that journalists can grasp and the public can understand.

The Don Low Communications Fellowship will offer a unique professional development experience to public health professionals.

The goal of the Fellowship is to give public health leaders even stronger communication skills to help them enrich the dialogue about the science of population and public health.

The Don Low Communications Fellowship was developed to honour the legacy of Dr. Don Low (*see story on page 4*).

The Fellowship, to be launched in the spring of 2013, will support training that builds understanding of media, enables the fellows to position and present themselves for media profile, and helps them polish their communication skills. Through the Fellowship, public health leaders will learn effective ways to convey messages to journalists, politicians, government officials and the public.

These two new outreach programs join the Student Travel Bursary (*see story on page 6*) and the annual Sheela Basrur symposium (*see story on page 5*). The work of the Sheela Basrur Centre will continue to evolve over the coming years, building on Dr. Basrur's legacy to ensure that public health remains a focus of ongoing discussion and reflection.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

The Sheela Basrur Centre has had a productive year!

Highlights include:

- New vision, mission and media outreach program
- “Vaccine wars, science and new media,” the successful Fourth Annual Sheela Basrur Symposium
- Two student travel bursary recipients, Mutiat Enikanolaiye and Ashley Motran, which makes a total of six students benefiting from the award since its inception in 2010
- *Dr. Don Low: A Celebration of Excellence* event in June 2012 to mark his exemplary career and raise nearly \$75,000 to establish a communications fellowship in his name
- Introductory media training workshop attended by 60 professionals

UPCOMING EVENTS

Student Travel Bursary – Call for Applicants
Winter 2013

Sheela Basrur Centre Symposium
Spring 2013

Don Low Communications Fellowship – Call for Applicants
Spring 2013

For more information on these events, visit the Sheela Basrur Centre website.

Above: SARS Press Conference, 2003



THE SHEELA BASRUR CENTRE

The Sheela Basrur Centre honours the legacy of Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario's former Chief Medical Officer of Health. In recognition of Dr. Basrur's life and her invaluable contributions to public health, family and friends

and Public Health Ontario staff work together to commemorate her achievements.

In 2009, the Sheela Basrur Centre was established through the generous support of its five founding partners and through

personal donations. Its mission is to advance public health knowledge and strengthen its leadership within Ontario through educational activities aimed at existing and emerging professionals.

The Centre is guided by an Advisory Council and is coordinated and supported by Public Health Ontario.

A lifelong legacy to public health

Known by many as a fearless leader and advocate for public health renewal, Dr. Sheela Basrur left an inspiring legacy that has changed the face of public health in Ontario.

Doctor Basrur is best known for her role during the 2003 SARS outbreak as the City of Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, where her leadership and expertise earned her the respect of not only her public health colleagues but the public at large.

As Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Basrur led the charge on a number of public health campaigns including implementing a city-wide smoking ban in 2004, devising a city plan to tackle bioterrorism post 9/11, and she paved the way for a ban on non-essential use of pesticides. She was also instrumental in implementing DineSafe, a restaurant inspection and signage program that communicates to patrons that food safety in a given establishment is up to provincial standards. DineSafe was the first program of its kind in Canada.

In 2004, Dr. Basrur was appointed Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister for the Public Health Division at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

During her tenure, she played a pivotal role in the renewal of public health in Ontario. She spearheaded Operation Health Protection, a three-year plan to rebuild Ontario's public health system,

including the creation of Public Health Ontario, new investments in infection prevention and control capacity across the health system as well as in local public health units.

Sadly, Dr. Basrur succumbed to cancer on June 2, 2008, at the age of 51. The Sheela Basrur Centre was established to honour her legacy.

"If I can help more people have a great life, then I'll have a great life."

SHEELA BASRUR



Dr. Sheela Basrur

THANK YOU

The Sheela Basrur Centre relies on sponsorships and donations to develop and run valuable programs that help strengthen public health in Ontario. The Centre would like to thank all the individual donors, our founding partners, event sponsors and the Basrur family for their ongoing generosity and support. It is because of you that the Centre's educational and professional development activities are possible. Your support is vital. Thank you.



SPONSORSHIP AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Sheela Basrur Centre's programs make a significant and lasting contribution to public health and public health professionals. **But it is only through generous donations and sponsorships that the**

important work of the Centre can continue.

Organizations can support the Centre by becoming a Don Low Communications Fellowship Founder or a Sheela Basrur Centre Event Partner.

Both **sponsorship opportunities** will allow your organization to be part of a novel public health-focused Centre and increase its profile.

Individuals and organizations can make a **tax-deductible donation** in any amount to

support the activities of the Centre.

For more information on how to support the Centre, please visit the Sheela Basrur Centre website or contact us at SBC@oahpp.ca.

A leading voice for public health

On June 19, 2012, more than 160 guests gathered to celebrate the exemplary life and work of Dr. Don Low and to raise funds to establish a communications fellowship in his name.



An internationally recognized expert in infectious diseases and a former medical director of the Public Health Ontario Laboratories, Don Low played a key role in supporting Ontario's response to SARS in 2003. Since then, he has focused his attention on transforming the public health laboratories, among many other accomplishments.

Host Jay Ingram, renowned Canadian author and broadcaster, kept the evening lively and filled with laughs, lessons and memories. Don's achievements and the man himself were suitably fêted through presentations, film clips and heartfelt speeches. Don was toasted by colleagues and friends, including Dr. Vivek Goel, President and CEO, Public Health Ontario, Dr. Fran Jamieson, Acting Medical Director, Public Health Ontario Laboratories, and Dr. Lionel Mandell, Professor Emeritus, McMaster University.

Former Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman, shared his appreciation for both Sheela's and Don's guidance during and following the SARS outbreak:

"As a citizen, I gained confidence from Sheela Basrur and Don Low." Dr. Arlene King, Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario, thanked Don on behalf of current Health and Long-Term Care Minister Deb Matthews for his "enormous contribution to our health care system."

Don was pleased with the night's events. "An evening like this you can't dream about... not only to have your colleagues, your friends, your family gather like this but to be honoured this way."

The event at the Royal Conservatory of Music helped raise nearly \$75,000 through ticket sales and sponsorships to establish the Don Low Communications Fellowship. Of that amount, \$25,000 is being earmarked for the Fellowship through a special contribution by Pfizer.

*The Sheela Basrur Centre and Dr. Don Low would like to thank all the speakers. Our gratitude goes out to our **event sponsors**: Abbott, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), Lifelabs, LabWare, Merck, Novartis. **Special thanks** and recognition to Pfizer for its contributions in establishing the Don Low Communications Fellowship.*

"An evening like this you can't dream about... not only to have your colleagues, your friends, your family gather like this but to be honoured this way."

DON LOW

DON LOW COMMUNICATIONS FELLOWSHIP

Launching in 2012-2013, The Sheela Basrur Centre will administer a yearly fellowship that offers a unique professional development experience. The Don Low Communications Fellowship will support public health professionals in strengthening their communication skills to become more effective spokespersons. The goal of the Fellowship is to build communications leaders in public health who can enrich the dialogue about the science of population and public health.

Applicants are welcome from across the public health disciplines actively working in Ontario. Ideally, candidates will be working in an Ontario public health unit. The Fellowship will target mid-career professionals but may also accept more experienced professionals who wish to perfect their communication skills and may benefit from Fellowship.

For more information on the Fellowship, please visit the media program section of the Sheela Basrur Centre website.

Above: Dr. Don Low and guests at the Dr. Don Low: A Celebration of Excellence event on June 19, 2012.

THE 2012 SHEELA BASRUR SYMPOSIUM

Vaccine wars, science and new media

On April 2, 2012, three dynamic and engaging speakers addressed the controversy surrounding vaccinations at the Fourth Annual Sheela Basrur Symposium, “Changing practice in a changing landscape: vaccine wars, science and new media.”

The Symposium, which kicked off the three-day The Ontario Public Health Convention (TOPHC), filled the Grand West and Centre Ballroom at the Sheraton Downtown Centre Hotel, in Toronto, Ontario.

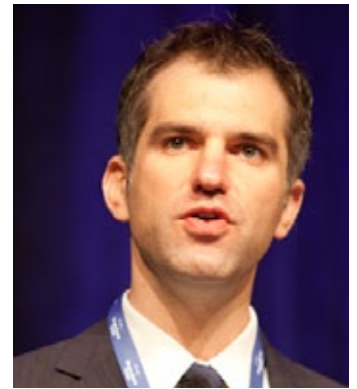
The speakers tackled critical, thought-provoking questions about communicating to the public. They spoke about counteracting misinformation, building trust and improving access; being open and transparent about risks and the unknown in public health; and developing new social media strategies and platforms to encourage cooperation and engagement.

Dr. Vivek Goel, President and CEO of Public Health Ontario led an engaging panel discussion with Seth Mnookin, an award-winning journalist and author of *The Panic Virus: A True Story of Medicine, Science, and Fear*; Dr. Noni MacDonald, a leader in paediatric infectious

disease; and Dr. Jennifer Keelan, an expert in the use of social media for knowledge exchange and behavioural change. Together, they applied their collective knowledge and expertise to the topic of public health communications.

With a particular focus on immunization, each speaker offered unique insights into how to convey important public health messages to the public and develop effective means to influence behaviour and bring about positive health outcomes.

The symposium would not have been possible without the generous contributions of Pfizer, which sponsored the event through an unrestricted educational grant.



Top: Seth Mnookin, keynote speaker

Middle (L-R): Panelists Dr. Jennifer Keelan and Dr. Noni MacDonald

Bottom: Audience at the fourth annual Sheela Basrur Symposium

SARS, ten years later



It's been ten years since SARS took the world by surprise. The calm, clear and reassuring words from Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Sheela Basrur, helped Toronto through the SARS crisis and earned Dr. Basrur the respect of not only her public health colleagues here in Ontario, but also around the world.

Recognizing the tenth anniversary of SARS, the role Dr. Basrur played in the crisis, and the new direction of the Sheela Basrur Centre, the Fifth Annual Sheela Basrur Symposium will explore communication strategies during the emergence of a global disease drawing

from lessons learned from the SARS experience and since. The symposium will be the opening event for The Ontario Public Health Convention (TOPHC) 2013, which will be held from April 3 to April 5, 2013 at the Sheraton Centre Downtown Hotel in Toronto. It will include

engaging speakers, interactive activities and great learning and networking opportunities. The Sheela Basrur Symposium is open to the public and is free of charge so mark your calendars for April 3, 2013, from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. Please visit www.tophc.ca to register.

2012 STUDENT TRAVEL BURSARY AWARD

The next public health leaders

Two exceptional master of public health candidates from Queen's University and the University of Toronto were selected as the recipients of the 2012 Sheela Basrur Student Travel Bursary.



Mutiat Enikanolaiye

Growing up in southwestern Nigeria, Mutiat Enikanolaiye saw first-hand how a lack of access to health care can affect a community.

"Knowledge is the kryptonite to several global health problems and I intend to use it in my career: both to educate populations on better health practices and to help raise the next generation of public health champions."

Completing a placement in Limbe, Cameroon, with Aids Free Africa in collaboration with Cameroon Public Health at the Cameroon Christian Welfare Medical Foundation Clinic, Mutiat will be working on a

sanitation project, teaching food handlers how to properly prepare food in light of Cameroon's recent cholera outbreak. She will also support the HIV and maternal-child programs run by the clinic.

"Without the Sheela Basrur Award, an international practicum would just be beyond my reach," Mutiat said. Mutiat worked throughout her studies in Canada to be able to support her family, showing that hard work and dedication to public health gives individuals the opportunity to give back to society in a meaningful way.



Ashley Motran

"Have passion for what you do, then you'll feel like you can make a difference" says Ashley Motran.

Ashley returned from a placement in Eldoret, Kenya, where she worked with the Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare (AMPATH). AMPATH is a working model to build capacity for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. As part of the program, she provided community-level care and evaluated nutrition and food security programs for pregnant and lactating women.

The most important lesson Ashley learned in her travels is to listen. "Public health is not prescriptive. Letting communities teach you and guide you is the only way to understand the health issues they face." Now back in Ontario, Ashley is still working with AMPATH, helping with a longitudinal study on the health assessments of orphaned and street children in Kenya.

When asked what her advice is for students interested in working abroad, Ashley says, "Give it a shot. Be open to new things. I was nervous at first, too, but you'll never know if you don't try."



SHEELA BASRUR STUDENT TRAVEL BURSARY

Drs. Vasanth and Pari Basrur established the student travel bursary in memory of their daughter, Dr. Sheela Basrur. Each year, two students are awarded the bursary to

support their public health studies abroad. The bursary provides financial assistance for travel costs associated with the student placement. This support shapes today's crop

of students, broadening their perspectives on public health much like Dr. Basrur's travels in India and Nepal sparked her interest in public health as a young physician. The bursary

supports students as they become practitioners and researchers in the field.

To find out more about the bursary, please visit the Sheela Basrur Centre website.



Looking ahead

An interview with Dorothy (Dot) Pringle, Chair of the Sheela Basrur Centre Advisory Council

Question (Q): Why are you involved with the Sheela Basrur Centre?

Dot Pringle (DP): I worked with Sheela when she was Medical Officer of Health (MOH) of East York and of Toronto, and then Chief MOH of Ontario. I always admired her thinking and approach to public health and especially her leadership during the SARS outbreak. I was honoured when Dr. Goel invited me to chair the Advisory Council.

Q: The Sheela Basrur Centre Advisory Council has endorsed a new direction for the Centre that focuses on communications and leadership. What was the impetus for going in this direction?

DP: When the Council examined the needs and gaps in expertise of the public health workforce, the development of communication skills, broadly defined, surfaced as a critical need. Expertise in communication is important for public health professionals to convey important dimensions of such things as prevention and risk assessment and mitigation. The Centre should be a resource to help develop the requisite skills.

Q: How do you see the new direction for the Centre helping to strengthen public health in Ontario and the skills of public health professionals?

DP: Increasingly, we are confronted with the gap between what research is teaching us about maintaining and improving health and the usual health practices of the population. Strong communications and public health communicators are essential to increasing uptake of information and hopefully, improving health practices.

Q: What needs to be done to ensure that there are public health leaders like Sheela Basrur in the future?

DP: Sheela personified the expert communicator and shone a spotlight on how important communication is for public health. Providing opportunities for public health professionals to work with communications experts, attend training sessions, take courses or receive mentoring are just some ways to help them develop communication skills.

The Centre is a new resource for public health in Ontario. Contributing to the development of communication expertise of the workforce is an important way of demonstrating its value.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Sheela Basrur Centre Advisory Council is instrumental in setting the Centre's programming and initiatives. Composed of committed volunteers and chaired by Dorothy (Dot) Pringle, the Council establishes the long-term vision and priorities for the Centre and provides oversight. The members are:

Alex Hukowich
 Alan Meek
 Dorothy (Dot) Pringle, Chair
 Elinor Caplan
 John Garcia
 Kent Bassett-Spiers
 Maureen Taylor
 Perry Kendall
 Ruth Grier
 Shirley Hoy
 Vivek Goel

Public Health Ontario staff support the Advisory Council and coordinate the activities of the Centre.

Above: Members of the Sheela Basrur Centre Advisory Council at the Ontario Public Health Convention (TOPHC) 2012 on April 2, 2012.

From left: John Garcia, Kent Bassett-Spiers, Dot Pringle, Vivek Goel, Maureen Taylor and Alan Meek.

Supporting the Sheela Basrur Centre



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The Sheela Basrur Centre partners with the Toronto Community Foundation, which processes donations and manages the Centre's funds. Donors will receive tax receipts issued from the Toronto Community Foundation.

All funds donated via the Toronto Community Foundation go directly to the Sheela Basrur Centre.

The Toronto Community Foundation, a registered, public non-profit organization, is one of the largest of

Canada's 178 community foundations. Established in 1981, it now holds over \$255 million in assets and works with hundreds of Torontonians and high-impact community organizations.

For more information about donations and sponsorship opportunities, visit www.sheelabasrurcentre.ca or contact us at SBC@oahpp.ca.

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