

Historic signing ceremony of MOU for Graduate Nursing Education between UHCON and INC, India



Signing ceremony of the MOU for Graduate Nursing Education between Ms. Kathryn Tart, Dean, University of Houston college of Nursing and Mr. T. Dileep Kumar, President, Indian Nursing Council. CG Dr. Anupam Ray, DCG. Mr. Surendhra Adhana, Dr. Suresh Khator, Mr. Jiten Agarwal, Jagdip Ahluwalia Dr. Virendra Mathur, Dr. Shainy Varghese attended the signing ceremony. Consul General of India Facebook picture.

By Shobana Muratee

A historical Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was entered by and between the University of Houston College of Nursing (UHCON) and Indian Nursing Council, (INC) India on Tuesday, April 17, 2018 followed by a signing ceremony and dinner reception held at the Office of the Consulate General of India here in Houston.

In his welcome address Deputy Consul General Surendra Adhana said, “This is a very small step to ensure that we feel every day, some momentous contribution in ensuring that our India-US relationship becomes much stronger.”

Kathryn Tart, EdD, MSN, RN. Founding Dean and Professor, UH College of Nursing who was the signatory for UNCON said, “In the University of Houston, one of the ways to move forward from our nurse practice is through the baccalaureate program, to nurse practitioner program, and to our doctoral program. We think, that is a proper way to ensure that education is given to our students both here in our state, nation and globally. We are very keen in making sure that is part

of our history and part of our trajectory of where the UHCON is taking us.” Dr. Tart praised the efforts of Dr. Durga Agarwal, UH Regeant in initiating this landmark MOU. It was during one of the biannual meeting of deans from all over Texas where nearly 45 deans attend, Dr. Tart recalled that one of them mentioned the name of Dr. Agarwal and his contribution in getting the doctorate of nursing practice finally approved in the state of Texas. There are 350,000 registered nurses in the State of Texas of which only 2% have a doctorate. Dr. Tart mentioned. “Finally we are able to help patients in a much better way than we ever were able to before. Dr. Tart also mentioned that the MOU was officially signed by UH Provost, Paula Myrick Short and UH Global Initiatives Vice Chancellor Dr. Ortis with Mr. T. Dileep Kumar, President, Indian Nursing Council early that day.



Jagdip Ahluwalia, Executive Director, Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH) emceed the program and introduced the speakers.

“I was taken care by nurses and compounders until I was 17 years while growing up in a small village in India,” said Dr. Durga Agarwal, an experience that would drive him to support the Doctorate of Nursing Program (DNP) while serving on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Dr. Agarwal went on to give a brief background on how the DNP was brought from UTMB to UH. Despite much opposition from medical doctors, he said he was successful in getting the program approved. There are now 13 DNP operating in Texas. Dr. Agarwal said he had mentioned the success of DNP programs in Texas during his meeting with India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year and told him that “it could be a game changer for India, a brand new pipeline for healthcare in India.” Dr. Agarwal said this was his way of paying back to India for the good education he had received there for probably just \$10 which now costs \$250,000 or so.

Mr. Dileep Kumar, President, Indian Nursing Council, India and the signatory of the MOU said, “India his currently going through a quantification expansion of nursing education. We are 1700 nursing educational institutions offering Baccalaureate program, about 3000 offering diploma program and 650 institutions offering the PG program in nursing.” “Though we are gone in quantification of expansion, quality is a concern to us now,” he added. “The Government of India National Health policy of 2017 is focusing more on nurses training and specialization.” It has an ordeal to convince the medical fraternity to get Nurse Practitioner Program approved by Government of India mainly because there immediate concern was that ‘they may lose their practice,” he said. Mr. Kumar referred to Dr. Devi Shetty, a Padma Bhushan-awarded cardiac surgeon in India who commented that if India doesn’t create a career pathway for nursing professionals in India, the day may come when they have to import nurses from Thailand and the Philippines. This statement was used to motivate policy makers to get the approval for nurse practitioners for the first time. “The Nurse Practitioner in Critical Care was approved and the Dean of CMC Vellore authored its syllabus,” he said. Today 50 institutions have been approved to start the Nurse Practitioners and Health Care Program. It was during that time, he said they were informed about Dr. Agarwal’s proposed DNP program in India. “It seemed very promising as we did not have anything after Nurse Practitioner in Critical Care. Then it was agreed that we start a pilot program, and the clearance for signing of MOU was given.”



Mr. Kumar also mentioned that India's National health Policy of 2017 has framework in place to phase out all the diploma programs into degree programs by 2021. There is a serious lack of data on the nurses which spans from 1947 to date. "We now have a live registry program called NRTS (Nurse Registration Tracking System) which tracks nurses in India and those going aboard. Already 3 lakh nurses are enrolled in the NRTS and we have physical data." This new initiative is going to improve in a big way, the quality of Nursing in India, Mr. Kumar said. The Nurse Practitioners Primary Health Care is also being approved he informed. "We have to move forward and as there is more demand for Nurse Practitioners in Anesthesia," he added.

Consul General Dr. Anupam Ray congratulated both signing parties and especially thanked Dr. Agarwal for his contribution. Dr. Ray spoke of India's phenomenal economic growth, "We will soon be \$10 trillion economy in the next 20 years and that is a glimpse of the kind of scope in India for health care business," he remarked.



A section of the audience who attended the MOU signing ceremony on Tuesday, April 17, 2018.

Dr. Shainy Varghese UHCON encouraged nurses to pursue their doctorate in nursing. The Indian Nurses president Akkamma said it was about time nurses in India received the much need attention and respect. At one point she pointed out to Mrs. Moani Thomas, who was in the audience, and mentioned that she was the first nurse to come to the US. This was not accurate, as Mrs. Thomas later told this reporter that she came only in 1971.

Dy. Consul General, Adhana proposed a Vote of Thanks after which the MOU signing ceremony concluded the evening's formal program.