

Our Doctors Have a tremendous IMPACT

Some people search all their lives to find a place that feels like home. For others, like Dr. Ali Kara, all the planets just seem to align to guide them to the right place, the right job and the right people that truly make a place home.

Born in Newfoundland, Ali relocated as a youngster when his parents—both physicians—decided to move to Stratford. They wanted Ali to be closer to family and his cultural roots, but not swallowed up in a large city.

They also wanted to work somewhere their skills would be appreciated and they could have maximum impact in their community...as both did here in Stratford: Ali's father, Dr. Alnoor Kara as a family physician, and his mother Dr. Shamim Tejpar as a pediatrician who became the driving force behind the creation of Stratford General's paediatric program.

In many ways, says Ali, he feels like he grew up at Stratford General. He has fond memories of accompanying his mom on ward rounds when he was young. "I'd be bundled up and the nurses would look after me. Some of them remember feeding me popsicles and cookies when I was kid. They still do that when I'm having a bad day!" he laughs.

Following school at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, and a three-year residency at Western, Ali did a fellowship in General Internal Medicine at McMaster and additional studies in echo cardiology.

But it was his exposure to Stratford General's Dr. Shanil Narayan during a placement early in his training that helped guide his return to Stratford and steered him towards becoming a doctor of internal medicine rather than pursuing his first love—pediatrics.

"Seeing that incredible model of internal medicine when I was a trainee was what motivated me to come back to practice here. In Stratford, we truly do the breadth of general internal medicine that you don't generally see in other centres...both a wide variety of cases and a fairly high acuity," he explains.

"That helps us stay sharp and on top of the game. It forces you to be active and proactive and read the newest literature and latest studies in a variety of realms of medicine, because you really don't know what is coming through the door next," he says.



Dr. Ali Kara

Ali is clearly motivated by kindness and compassion—of wanting to use his skills and knowledge to better the lives of others. "From an altruistic perspective, there's nothing that compares to helping a patient and their family through what is often the scariest time in their lives. It's truly a privilege."

But he also enjoys the intellectual challenge of internal medicine. "With the breadth of what we cover it can be very exciting and challenging...like a mystery or a puzzle that you have to crack—one that often requires a lot of detective work," he explains.

He has strong praise for his fellow physicians, nurses and hospital staff who've been under considerable pressure during the pandemic. Due to COVID, Critical Care capacity was more

than doubled at the hospital and the acuity of COVID patients and the length of time needed for their recovery has weighed heavily on all.

Like other physicians and healthcare workers, addressing COVID has taken precedence over lower priority activities, whether that's routine tests, non-urgent surgeries, or ambulatory patients Ali would usually see in a clinic.

"We've had to focus our attention where it's needed most...and we're seeing much sicker patients coming through our doors," he says. "It's been stressful, frightening and exhausting both physically and emotionally, but it has also brought out the best in us. Our people have just stepped up and done what was needed to serve our patients."

And those demands have been significant—lives hanging in the balance, a minimum of two or three weeks in the ICU for patients with COVID, and weeks of rehabilitation in a recovery ward. Ali is hopeful that the majority of people who still haven't received their COVID shots are doing so through lack of education on vaccines—and may hopefully come around to getting one. "Because the answer to COVID is here," he says. "It doesn't make any sense if you choose not to embrace it."

Just like other physicians and staff at SGH, Ali's ability to care for his patients not only hinges on his knowledge, skills and teamwork, but also depends on the tools and technology funded by donors through the SGH Foundation. While many aspects of healthcare are paid for by the provincial government, that does not include new and replacement hospital equipment—even lifesaving tools and technology.

After glancing at the Foundation's current priority list of equipment, Ali pauses briefly before speaking. "You know, two-thirds of the items on that list are things we rely on each day. They are necessary items—not optional. They are integral to providing an exceptional level of care," he says.

"Donating to the Hospital Foundation is a way of supporting your own community—and that's important, adds Ali. "That generosity flows back to your own neighbours, friends and family."

(see full story in our Winter 2021 Monitor Newsletter)



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CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE Saturday December 11th

Toys for the House of Blessing and Donations will be collected for the Stratford General Hospital Foundation

Hope lights our way through the darkest of times ...



Our Christmas letter to you is in the mail. Your gifts have tremendous impact. When we stand together, we remember the real meaning of the season—that sharing our blessings with others makes us all richer, and caring for one another makes us all stronger. Please show your support with a gift towards essential medical equipment today. Donors make up the very fabric of our community. Together like pieces of a quilt, your generosity can blanket our community in caring, ensuring every patient who comes

through our hospital's doors feels safe, secure and confident they are in the best of hands. Please consider mailing in your donation, phoning us, making a gift on-line, or dropping off your donation in person. 519-272-8210 ext 2626 or 2636.



A very BIG Thank you to Bill and Corrie Vink who have made a wonderful gift of \$402,157.34 towards the Fluoroscopy Unit at Stratford General Hospital!



During many cancers/treatments throughout the years and her most recent cancer battle, Corrie Vink has utilized equipment throughout the hospital and most recently treatments in the chemo unit. Both Bill and Corrie Vink believe Stratford General staff and physicians are second to none and are grateful for all the compassion and care throughout their healthcare journey. In appreciation, they made a gift of \$402,000 towards the \$852,000 Digital Fluoroscopy unit since they wanted to give to our top priority. Fluoroscopy is a type of medical imaging that shows a continuous X-ray image on a monitor, much like an X-ray movie. The Vink's support of our Fluoroscopy unit ensures state-of-the-art x-ray services (to aid diagnostics) are available for patients close to home- for decades to come. We can never say thank you enough!

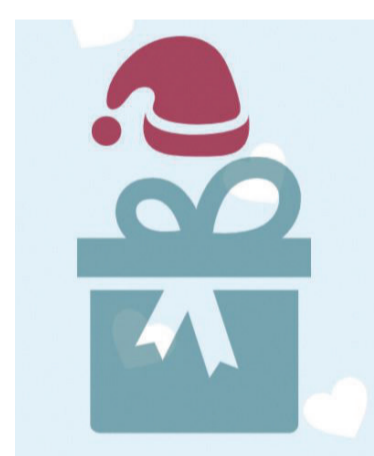
"Mama and Peach" Gives Back to NICU



Pictured: Keegan Diehl, Hayley Fine-Diehl, Stratford General Hospital RNs Stephanie Masse and Anita Ball.

We can never say thank you enough to Hayley Fine-Diehl and Keegan for your impactful donation of "Mama and Peach" sale proceeds & imprint kits for our Special Care Nursery in loving memory of your angel, Baby Hazel.

Mat/Child Christmas Drop-Off



The SGH Foundation office
(West Gore and John St)
Monday December 13-
Wednesday December 15th
9AM-5 PM

In the spirit of holiday giving, if you were considering donating to our MATERNAL CHILD UNIT, we will be accepting gifts of: unused and unopened toys, infant sweaters, board books, pyjamas/sleepers and NICU handmade "octopus".

Please note: Donors are not allowed to deliver the gifts directly to the unit.

Thank you!

A thoughtful gift- and a win WIN!



Did You Know?

You can GIFT SGH 50/50 tickets

* Add gift recipient's info in Step 1, Add YOUR name in Step 2 (Billing Info)*

WINNERS have taken home \$60,000+ (gross) !

Purchase online: www.stratfordhospital5050.com



A reason to SMILE



We're SO appreciative of our community's support for the 2021 Tim Hortons "SMILE Cookie" campaign... You've helped raise \$27,308.70 for "Closing The Gap" Youth Mental Health! And, it wouldn't have been possible without the kindness of Stratford owners: Brent Theobald, Lisa MacDonald, Cheryl Moore, and Megan Adair gathered here.

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