

This Pakistani Health Dispensary is Changing Lives in Daska

By Aaron Burch, DHC

Home to nearly 200,000 people, the industrial city of Daska, Pakistan, is situated near other larger cities that keep traffic and commerce flowing. Despite work opportunities, a significant portion of Daska's population falls below the poverty line, and the region is still struggling to provide proper medical assistance to its residents.

Bilal Ahmed, MBBS, is the founder of the Amanullah Sahi Dispensary, a free clinic in Daska where residents receive treatment for a wide variety of ailments and medical emergencies. Dr. Ahmed was raised in Daska and found himself driven to assist this fragile ecosystem.



Thanks to collaboration with his wife, Dr. Ansa Ahmed, as well as family and staff on the ground in Daska, Dr. Ahmed has made the Amanullah Sahi Dispensary into a pillar of health care in the Punjab region of Pakistan.

"The family structure in Pakistan typically relies on a single bread winner. There may be five to seven people dependent on the income of that one person," Dr. Ahmed explained. "God forbid, if that person becomes ill, the whole unit goes hungry and they lose all their resources. They may not have enough money to eat, much less buy health care."



Dr. Ahmed went on to say that preventative health care is almost non-existent in the region. "That goes for children, mothers and everyone else. Because there is no preventative care, bigger health issues develop, and people have no resources to look after themselves."

The Amanullah Sahi Dispensary diagnoses numerous illnesses, but some of the most common are upper respiratory tract infections, skin infections, hypertension, diarrheal illness, diabetes

and pregnancy related issues. Currently, the dispensary's medical staff is made up of one primary care physician, one nurse practitioner, one nurse and one obstetrician/gynecologist.

The OB/GYN is a new development. Prenatal care is extremely limited in Pakistan and

malnourishment can lead to numerous detrimental long-term effects in children. Children born with low birth weight have a higher mortality rate, a lack of glucose and insulin that can lead to type 2 diabetes, and poor spinal growth.

“There’s almost a total lack of prenatal services in Pakistan,” said Dr. Ahmed. “This isn’t as simple as ‘mother and child.’ This can affect the child’s whole life. We felt very strongly about improving the quality of life for these babies, so we hired an obstetrician to do what we could.” Not only that, but the Dispensary keeps cows to provide dairy milk to children for free (approximately 300 liters per day).

The Dispensary operates on a graded payment system. Those who can’t pay, don’t. Those who can, should. “It’s an honor system we ask of our payments. Low income visitors to the clinic receive a free consultation and three days of medication.”

Although Dr. Ahmed lives and works in Rochester, New York, he can check in with the Dispensary regularly thanks to advancements in telemedicine. Technology now allows both him and his wife to view and comment on patient management from thousands of miles away. As this feature blossoms, Dr. Ahmed is eyeing sub-specialty connections where patients can receive virtual care from physicians across the globe.



Dr. Ansa Ahmed’s work must be mentioned as well. She has been a driving force for women’s health within the clinic. “That’s her passion. Its through her that this prenatal care has been possible, and she is a strong advocate for the girl’s orphanage that we support as well,” Dr. Bilal Ahmed explained.

“The orphanage has about 100 children from ages two to 20. We take all comers and provide a well-rounded education for them to succeed in life. One former resident is now a pilot in the air force.”



The Amanullah Sahi Dispensary was founded in tandem with the Sahi Charitable Trust (named after Dr. Ahmed’s grandfather, the late Brigadier G.R. Chowdhry) which funded the building and maintenance of the site. “I wouldn’t have been able to do this without the involvement of my family who lives and works there,” Dr. Ahmed said. “They have been essential to the clinic’s success, and I wanted to tip my hat.”

Nearby, the Trust (in collaboration with local government) has also established an elementary school for young women grades three to eight.

“We feel strongly about female education. Misogyny unfortunately remains a part of all cultures, even here in the United States, but these young girls needed some semblance of education,” Dr. Ahmed said. “The

government provided teachers for the facility and 150 girls visit for education, books and stationery.”

The clinic sees upwards of 90 patients each day, and the number is even higher if prenatal care is included. Although they have made great strides to serve the community, “the needs are unbelievable,” Dr. Ahmed said.

“We could certainly see more patients and expand our capabilities if we had more funding. We’re barely keeping it together because we try not to charge our patients.”

Dr. Ahmed mentions dental care, overnight

treatment, and intravenous treatment of dehydration as next endeavors that he would like to see the clinic pursue. "We're not there yet, but those are more services we are considering."

In 2020, a donation was made to the Amanullah Sahi Dispensary in DHC's name. [You can read the full article on DHC's website.](#)

Anyone interested in assisting the Amanullah Sahi Dispensary can reach out to DHC at dhcus502@gmail.com to make a donation. DHC will be providing updates on the great work Dr. Ahmed and his team are doing in Daska in the months to come.

"You can't heal the whole world," Dr. Ahmed said. "All you can do is your small part. Thank you to DHC from the bottom of my heart. All you give goes directly to these patients."



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