

## **Press Communication – 9 September 2018**

### **Foundation childrens hospital Kantha Bopha, Dr. med. Beat Richner**

#### **Dr. med. Beat Richner "Beatocello" deceased**

The foundation board has the painful duty to inform you that the founder and benefactor Dr. med. Beat Richner „Beatocello“ (13 March 1947 – 9 September 2018) has passed away after a serious illness.

#### **Dr. Beat Richner's lifetime achievements**

Professor Dr. med. Dr. h.c.mult. Beat Richner leaves behind a legacy of extraordinary, unparalleled, successful, and sustainable lifetime achievements that deserves him greatest admiration.

He was already a popular and widely renowned paediatrician, a cellist and a musical clown when he decided 27 years ago to follow the call of the King of Cambodia, Norodom Sihanouk, who asked him to rebuild the Children's hospital Kantha Bopha that was devastated following the war and the reign of terror by the Khmer Rouge.

Since 1991, the Swiss Doctor successfully built and extended the Childrens Hospitals in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap with tireless effort and overcame insurmountable odds to implement a new, and virtually revolutionary approach in medical help in poor countries: free and effective medical care for all.

Dr. Richner frequently returned to Switzerland to give cello concerts to present his work and raise funds. Thanks to the generosity of the Swiss people, he was able to care for, operate on and vaccinate millions of children. His actions saved hundreds of thousands of severely ill children from certain death. Experts all over the world agree that the Cambodian staff now work so efficiently and successfully that Dr. Beat Richner's sustainable life's work represents the best example for efficient care in healthcare sector.

Dr. Beat Richner was crowned the first «Swiss of the Year» and is recognised as the leading humanitarian ambassador for our country.

#### **The continuity of the hospitals**

Due to his illness, Dr. Richner had to pass over the responsibility for management of the hospitals to his deputy and long-standing companion Dr. med. Peter Studer, Vice President of the foundation board in March 2017. The Kantha Bopha hospitals with its 2'500 well-trained Cambodian employees work medically and technically independently under the direction of the Cambodian team of doctors and the operational head, Dr. biol. Denis Laurent.

The education and training of the Cambodian doctors continues to be guaranteed by the strategic cooperation with the university children's hospital Zurich, under the responsibility of the new director Prof. Dr. med. Michael Grotzer and the successor of Prof. Dr. med. Felix Sennhauser, both members of the foundation board, and by other specialists in Switzerland and abroad.

The Kantha Bopha hospitals in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh are departments of the Cambodian Health Ministry and have the status of university clinics. Moreover, the Cambodian government publicly stated in 2015 that the Kantha Bopha hospitals act as a model for their health system. In March 2016, Beat Richner was appointed advisor of the Ministry of Health in Cambodia and served in the rank of a secretary of state.

The Cambodian government under the Prime Minister Hun Sen therewith acknowledged Dr. Beat Richner's outstanding achievement and the great importance of the Kantha Bopha hospitals for their healthcare system. The Kantha Bopha hospitals care for around 85% of all sick children in Cambodia and are therefore systemic relevant („too big to fail“) for the healthcare system in Cambodia.

### **On future financing**

Dr. Beat Richner made it clear to the Cambodian government a few years ago that he would not always be able to play the Cello and raise funds. Following Dr. Beat Richner's pressure, the Ministry of Finance and Health founded a working group in 2015 implemented specifically to develop solutions for long-term financing of the Kantha Bopha hospitals. The foundation board is in ongoing, proactive and effective dialogue with this valued working group. High representatives of the Ministry of Health and Finance have ensured their full support of the childrens hospitals.

In 2016, the Cambodian state contribution was doubled to USD 6 million and since February 2017, we received a contribution of USD 2 for each entry ticket purchased to the famous temple grounds of Angkor Wat, which generates approximately USD 5-6 million per year. We are also very pleased that private donations in Cambodia are increasing substantially. In total in 2017, we received more than a third of our budget of CHF 42 million from Cambodia. The Swiss government has subsidised the Kantha Bopha hospitals through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for many years and continues to do so with an amount of CHF 4 million every year. In 2017, more than half of the budget was financed from donations from Switzerland. In the future, we are still urgently dependent on donations from Switzerland and hope for the continued faithful support of our many valued donors. Thank you very much!

In April 2018, the Prime Minister Hun Sen founded the trust “Kantha Bopha Kampuchea” and he himself holds the role on the honorary board. Furthermore, the Cambodian Finance Minister acts as chairman. The objective of the trust is to generate even more local donations for the Kantha Bopha hospitals from within Cambodia. Moreover, the new trust has responsibility of maintaining an additional security fund in the event a decline in donations at our foundation and financial bottleneck involved in the financing of the hospitals should occur. The trust was endowed with seed capital of USD 10 million by the Prime Minister Hun Sen; additional funds shall be accumulated through donations and continuous contributions by Cambodian supporters. Furthermore, the trust shall allow access to international aid funds (World Bank, ASEAN states) in the future. The new trust underlines the importance of the Kantha Bopha hospitals for Cambodia. The operational management of the Kantha Bopha continues to be based from our Swiss foundation.

As many may know, Dr. Richner's project was initially criticized as acting as a state within the state and as subversion of the health care system. It is now and from every corner of the world, including Cambodia, known and respected as a universally recognized model for poorer countries. The government of Cambodia is also very determined to preserve the Kantha Bopha hospitals the manner organised by Dr. Richner.

In the name of the foundation childrens hospital Kantha Bopha, Dr. med. Beat Richner

The President:

The Vice President

Dr. iur. René Schwarzenbach

Dr. med. Peter Studer

Contacts, if needed: Dr. iur. René Schwarzenbach, mobile 079 744 57 83

Dr. med. Peter Studer, mobile 079 669 03 57