



Vandrevala Foundation



## NEWS RELEASE

### VANDREVALA FOUNDATION AND MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA FORGE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP TO ADVANCE MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN INDIA

**MUMBAI/CALGARY, June 9, 2010** – The Cyrus and Priya Vandrevala Foundation and the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) announced today they have formed a ‘knowledge partnership’ that will be a valuable resource for the Foundation as it expands its initiative in India to raise awareness about mental health and improve the lives of people living with mental illness.

Priya Hiranandani-Vandrevala, co-founder of the Vandrevala Foundation, said:

“This international partnership is a major step forward for the Foundation. Our goal is to raise awareness in India about mental health in general and be a catalyst for major improvements here in the treatment and care of people living with mental illness. However, mental health is a complex field and while we are proud of what the Foundation has achieved thus far, there is much still to be accomplished. There is a vast body of knowledge and experience around the world that we can learn from and adapt and apply to the Indian context.

“The Mental Health Commission of Canada is recognized internationally as a leader in promoting mental health awareness and wellness and fostering international dialogue. We are honoured that they have agreed to share with us their knowledge and experience and open doors for us to their network of mental health experts in Canada and internationally.”

The MHCC was created by the Canadian government in 2007 to focus national attention in Canada on mental health and bring into being an integrated mental health system that places people living with mental illness at its centre. A non-profit organization, the MHCC is currently developing a mental health strategy for Canada and is engaged in several other major initiatives, including a national 10-year anti-stigma / anti-discrimination initiative called ‘Opening Minds’. The Canadian government has to date committed CAD\$240 million to support the Commission’s work for the 10-year period from 2007 to 2017.

Louise Bradley, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mental Health Commission of Canada, said: “Everyone who works in the field of mental health appreciates how important it is to share knowledge and learn from each other. For example, when we were developing our ‘Opening Minds’ anti-stigma initiative, we reached out to various organizations around the world to learn how they were addressing the issue of stigma in their respective countries, and their successes or failures in setting up anti-stigma programs.

“Today, our Commission has come a long way with our programs and we are now sharing what we have learned with other countries. This just shows that everyone benefits from international dialogue, so we are delighted to have this new opportunity to cooperate with the Vandrevala Foundation as they develop their mental health initiatives in India.”

The Vandrevala Foundation launched its *Mental Healthcare – India* initiative in October 2009 following a thorough study of the mental health sector in India.

As a first step, the Foundation established a 24x7 mental health helpline, initially covering Mumbai and adjoining suburbs. In early 2010, the helpline was named the official mental health helpline for the Brihanmumbai Mahanagar Palika (Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai). The Foundation plans to eventually expand the service, first throughout Maharashtra State and then across the whole of India.

The Foundation is focusing on two other main areas:

- An awareness campaign utilizing various communication media and techniques to actively spread awareness regarding mental health, address common myths and misconceptions, and de-stigmatize mental illness. This is likely to be an area of initial knowledge sharing between the Foundation and the MHCC.
- Creating well-staffed, showcase mental health treatment facilities at various locations in India to benefit patients and, through this process, dispel the outdated and wrong 'lunatic asylum' image that has been created by poor-quality indoor mental health facilities in India.

It has been estimated that over 20 million Indians suffer from serious mental illness such as schizophrenia and 50 million more from milder forms such as anxiety and depression, and yet anywhere from 50% to 90% of them are not able to access mental health services.

The Vandrevale Foundation envisions a society where each citizen has access to local, specialized and comprehensive mental health services that are of the highest standard and where individuals living with mental illnesses can lead a meaningful life of respect and social inclusion, free from stigma.

#### **About The Vandrevale Foundation**

The Vandrevale Foundation is a charitable social enterprise that aims to make a sustainable difference. Cyrus and Priya Vandrevale, who are well-known international entrepreneurs, set up the Foundation as a vehicle for their philanthropic activities. The Foundation is focusing on a number of causes, including mental health, dyslexia and multiple sclerosis. The Helpline number is **022-25706000** and email is [help@vandrevalefoundation.com](mailto:help@vandrevalefoundation.com).

#### **About the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC)**

The MHCC is a non-profit organization created to focus national attention in Canada on mental health issues. It is funded by the Canadian federal government but operates at arm's length from government. The Commission's objective is to enhance the health and social outcomes for Canadians living with mental health problems and illnesses. For more information, please visit [www.mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca).

#### **Contacts:**

##### **For the Vandrevale Foundation:**

**Dr. Arun John (in Mumbai)**

+91 22 2571 9000

[ajohn@vandrevalefoundation.com](mailto:ajohn@vandrevalefoundation.com)

##### **Gutenberg Communications**

**India – Pranav Kumar**

+91 98 1007 7898

[pranav@gutenbergpr.com](mailto:pranav@gutenbergpr.com)

##### **For the Mental Health Commission of Canada :**

**Stéphanie Lassonde (in Calgary)**

+1 403 255 5808; or +1 403 968 0242 (cell)

[slassonde@mentalhealthcommission.ca](mailto:slassonde@mentalhealthcommission.ca)