

Press Release:

Prajnopaya Foundation Hearing Aid Camp 2007

May 7, 2007

For Immediate Release

Cambridge, MA - May 2007 - Nine-year-old Anjali was falling behind in school. Although she is an intelligent and active girl, in school she was inattentive, bored and restless. The reason was simple although not necessarily obvious; Anjali has difficulty hearing.

The state of Bihar in northern India is one of the poorest states in the country. Access to health care is difficult at best and doctors are few and far between. Although the area is plagued by many health problems, including a high rate of tuberculosis, deafness and hearing disabilities can often be cured or alleviated fairly easily, leading to a significant increase in quality of life. For this reason, the Prajnopaya Foundation in collaboration with the medical division of the Siemens Inc. offered free screening for hearing problems. In April, screening "camps" were held in the villages of Dhanarua, Vaishali and Nalanda and over 175 people were screened for hearing loss. Where appropriate, medium or high strength hearing aids were provided and people with severe problems were referred to ENT specialists.

Much of Bihar is rural but the camps were held in sites that are close to major highways where traffic accidents involving hearing-impaired people were common. Like sight, hearing tends to deteriorate with age, so the camps focused on people aged over 55 and children under 12. For the children, it is particularly important to identify and treat problems. Without treatment, children with hearing loss tend to perform poorly in school and are more likely to think of themselves as mentally, rather than simply physically, challenged and to drop out of school. The difficulty of social interaction can lead to depression and affects work and social relationships for both children and adults.

Good quality hearing aids are very expensive, but with the generous assistance of the Siemens, aids will be provided for \$100 to \$125. The devices will benefit from Siemens' quality control as well as the company's warranty.

As for Anjali, her grades are already improving. She is no more suffering from the social stigma of being deaf and is thinking she may want to become a doctor when she grows up!

For more information on Upaya Care and to support Prajnopaya Foundation's healthcare initiatives, visit www.prajnopaya.org

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