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World-renowned experts gather at SFU to examine global health

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April 07, 2005

Global health will be on the examination table at a two-day conference on April 19-20, hosted by Simon Fraser University's faculty of health sciences (FHS) at the SFU Wosk Centre for Dialogue. The event will feature a one-day forum where the public can hear 15 high profile global health experts discuss diseases and health trends impacting populations worldwide. Among the speakers will be Stephen Matlin, Srinath Reddy and Kelley Lee. Matlin is the executive director of the Global Forum for Health Research at the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva. Reddy, a cardiologist at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in India, is an advisor to WHO on many projects. Lee is a senior lecturer on global health policy at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine at the University of London, England.

Recent global health concerns, such as the potential contribution of SARS, avian flu, West Nile virus, and earthquakes and tsunamis in Indonesia to the global spread of diseases, will generate lively discussion. The experts will also provide SFU with a private evaluation of a masters in global health program, which will be mounted in the faculty of health sciences next fall.

"Canada's health status is increasingly affected, like that of many countries, by ecological, technological, economic, political and socio-cultural forces. Understanding these 'upstream' global forces and their impact on health-in this country and others, especially poorer nations, is crucial to ensuring the future health of Canadians," says Charmaine Dean. The associate dean of FHS is one of the architects of the faculty's new population and public health masters in science program, and the masters in global health. "Demonstrating why and how the study of global health and the experiences of other countries are important to health care in Canada is central to the proposed master's in global health." Health sciences professors will use the conference experts' feedback to make sure their new program "provides a comprehensive overview of the complex processes influencing the health of populations and disease patterns around the world," says Dean.