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CHA to Recognize Hartford HealthCare Heart and Vascular Institute's Waseem Chaudhry, MD, as a Healthcare Hero

WALLINGFORD – At its 101st Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 20, 2019, the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) will recognize Waseem Chaudhry, MD, a cardiologist at Hartford HealthCare's Heart and Vascular Institute, as a 2019 Healthcare Hero. He was nominated by Susan McDonald for this award.

The moment Dr. Chaudhry examined a woman whose veins were protruding, filled with patches of yellow and red bumps because of her high cholesterol, he knew he was far, far away from his Hartford office. Dr. Chaudhry was in Amman, Jordan, as part of a team of 39 specialists offering free care through a mission trip organized by the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS).

The six-day trip was his first, but it will not be his last. Although he grew up in the U.S., Dr. Chaudhry's family had emigrated from the Middle East, and he feels a responsibility to share western medicine, supplies, and techniques with people there. Of the woman with "eruptive xanthomas" as a result of high cholesterol, he said, "We take things for granted. I had never seen anything like this before in my life. You don't see this sort of thing in real life in clinical practice in America."

The woman was just one of about 150 patients he and his partner cardiologist saw over the six days. The patients were mostly women and children, Syrian refugees, affected by the war in the Middle East. Waking at 5:00 a.m. each day, Dr. Chaudhry would fill a box with cardiology medications, grab a portable echocardiogram machine, and board a bus to a makeshift clinic close to the Syrian border two hours away, where he'd see patients non-stop until 5:00 p.m. One night during dinner back at his hotel, he received a text message from a doctor at the refugee camp about a young woman having a heart attack. He and his colleagues had her transferred so interventional cardiologists on the SAMS team could insert a stent in her heart, a procedure that saved her life.

Dr. Chaudhry not only plans to continue participating in humanitarian work, he has been calling on friends and colleagues to volunteer. He has also pledged to raise funds to provide surgery for two children he saw in Jordan with ventricular septal defects.

For Dr. Chaudhry, the volunteer work dovetails with his personal philosophy, adopted from a senior physician friend. He said, "There are three stages in a physician's life - learning, practicing, and giving back to make a difference."

CHA's Healthcare Heroes award was developed in 2002 to celebrate the invaluable contributions of healthcare workers, both to their field and to the community at large. Now in its 17th year, the presentation of the Healthcare Heroes awards has become a highlight of CHA's Annual Meeting.



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About CHA

The Connecticut Hospital Association has been dedicated to serving Connecticut's hospitals and health systems since 1919. Through state and federal advocacy, CHA represents the interests of Connecticut's hospitals and health systems on key healthcare issues in the areas of quality and patient safety, access and coverage, workforce, community health, health equity, and hospital reimbursement.