

BRIDGE Newsletter

INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED MEDICAL DOCTORS (ITMDs)

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Message from the Co-Founder and Program Manager, ITMD Bridging Program, Ryerson University

The ITMD Bridging Program began in the winter of 2015 at Ryerson University's G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education. Its goal was to provide a unique learning opportunity that would successfully integrate highly qualified, skilled, and experienced internationally trained medical doctors (ITMDs) into non-licensed healthcare employment. In the spring of 2017, the ITMD Road Map Research Study project – which provided a pathway for ITMDs to transition into careers in the non-licensed health sector by assessing transferrable skills and identifying skill gaps and barriers – was developed. This project was funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) and was successfully completed in 2018. (Visit continuing.ryerson.ca/ru/upload/itmd/roadmapforitmdsstudy_summary_report.pdf) for full details about the project.) The ITMD program started with a cost-sharing model to balance its budget, and it has maintained a surplus budget since 2017.



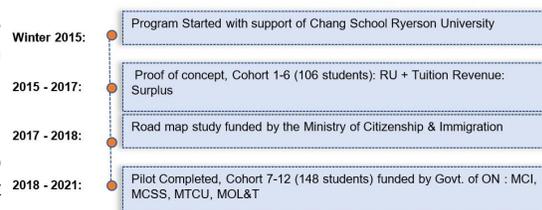
Dr. Shafi U. Bhuiyan PhD

As of today, job and higher education engagement rate for program participants is 86%. We have more than 25 partners in the GTA to support our ITMDs' professional development. The ITMD program is well received by ITMD alumni, current students, and our stakeholders for the quality of its course materials, an average of acquired skills, and overall participant satisfaction. Since the program's inception, 253 students from 52 countries have enrolled in 12 cohorts of the program. The target for future development is to maximize the enrolment of health professionals and to promote capacity building and networking among current and potential students. I am extremely grateful to our instructors for their commitment and continuing support in ensuring the best learning experience for our students, even with the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through our collaborative and interactive virtual learning experience, the ITMD Bridging Program continues to produce success stories.

The ITMD Bridging Program Growth and Sustainability Plan

Expansion of the ITMD Bridging Program, including the Brampton project and IEHP-ITMD joint program development, will supplement and complement the existing ITMD program. Seventy-five ITMDs are planned to be trained per year, and 60 internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) are planned to be added to the ITMD initiative each year in order to help support additional new immigrant health professionals in Ontario.

ITMDs history, accomplishment & further development plan [as of Oct. 2020]



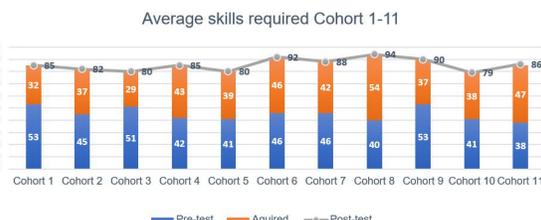
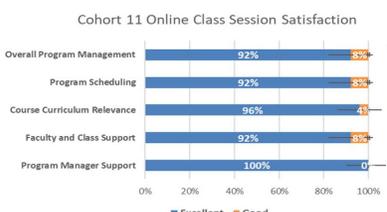
ITMD Bridging Program Shapes Participants' Future

The ITMD Bridging Program is a unique learning opportunity that removes the barriers encountered by internationally trained medical professionals after moving to Canada. Despite all odds during the pandemic, the program has found innovative ways to take on the challenges presented and empower its participants to move forward. Cohort 11 started virtual classes – a first for this program – in June 2020; the average satisfaction rate for the online class format was more than 95%.

Over 13 weeks, Dr. Bhuiyan invites renowned guest speakers to share their expertise with participants and provide a rare networking opportunity. This allows

students to overcome communication and cultural barriers. The program continues to demonstrate success in integrating internationally-trained doctors within the Canadian context, as 86% of program graduates are employed in the healthcare sector or enrolled for higher education in reputable universities.

The program also demonstrates a high level of satisfaction among participants, as their expertise increases to an average of 90% upon completion. This positive environment encourages successful long-term outcomes for ITMDs.





ITMD Bridging Program participants' country of origin , as of 2021



Alumni Reflections

ITMD Bridging Program participants | Cohort 11 & 12



Priscilla Afari | Cohort 12

As a Ghanaian-trained pediatrician and primary care physician who loves to ask questions, explore evidence-based medicine, and become professionally acquainted as a newcomer, I jumped into the opportunities provided by the ITMD Bridging Program. I experienced more than I anticipated! From knowing what to expect in the Canadian healthcare system in comparison to other developed countries, navigating the

Canadian communication style in professional and social circles, conducting systematic reviews using SPSS and Revman regarding timely COVID-19 impacts in Canada, and applying project management knowledge areas and processes, the program not only provided a Canadian university-level bridging education to integrate professionals, it also offered a pathway for networking through established partnerships by its passionate founder, Dr. Shafi Bhuiyan. Armed with this exposure, in addition to Canadian clinical observation experience, I am confident I will contribute effectively to Canadian healthcare.



Shayla Ahmed | Cohort 12

It was indeed a great privilege to have been selected as a participant for Cohort 12 of the ITMD Bridging Program at Ryerson University, and the knowledge and experience I gained were priceless. The intensive course framework is designed to perfectly bridge the gap between the skills and knowledge that we already have and the ones we need to integrate into the Canadian workforce. The program gave me the

opportunity to gain additional skills and knowledge in research methodology, Canadian leadership and communication styles, and health informatics – all taught by highly professional instructors. Through this program, I got the chance to work as a research intern for different health research projects with Dr. Shafi Bhuiyan, and it gave me the optimism and confidence to move ahead in Canada.



**Sugandha Agarwal | Cohort 12
(ITMD 2020 Award Recipient)**

I came across the ITMD Bridging Program by chance, at a point in my career where I was losing my motivation to keep going. When migrating to this beautiful country, every internationally trained medical professional brings along their hopes and dreams with them – I am one of them! I understood early on that there would be challenges and failures along the path to success, but I took every

experience as an opportunity to learn and walk a step further. This unique program is founded by Dr. Shafi Bhuiyan, an ITMD himself, and it is especially geared towards teaching ITMDs what it takes to be successful in the health sector in Canada – all through simple but essential courses tailored towards research, management, communication, and networking skills. Fortunately, with its current classes online during COVID, it gives an opportunity for virtual participation outside of Toronto for people like me. This program not only gives students an opportunity to sharpen their existing skills but to also add crucial new skills to widen opportunities in the non-licensed job market. It also helps us connect with diverse professionals and create a lifelong family of peers. I am glad that I am a part of this amazing program, which will provide continued guidance and valuable mentorship to keep moving ahead.



Saida Fathima Azam | Cohort 11

The ITMD Bridging Program has been well designed and structured. It has provided me with a solid platform through which to develop my skills in global health and research in the Canadian environment. The program is positively intensive and ensures a hands-on approach to presentation, project management, global health, research writing, and data management skills. Co-founder Dr. Shafi Bhuiyan

invites world-renowned guest speakers to share their expertise with us and provide us with a rare networking opportunity. The program paved my pathway to becoming a knowledge translator and a mental health facilitator. I am also currently involved in a number of interesting research projects that are focused on COVID-19 studies. I am one of the team members working on designing a maternal and child health handbook for Canadians that especially focuses on immigrant and refugee mothers. Last, but not least, I am actively involved in the diabetes campaign organized by the Scarborough Global Doctors Lions. The ITMD program, in my experience, has been an amazing journey.



The 6th Annual ITMD Virtual Mix and Mingle "CAMPUR 2020" | December 2020

Remarks at 6th ITMD Annual Virtual Mix and Mingle, Dec 2020



"None of us are safe from COVID-19 until all of us are safe from COVID-19."

Dr. Lawrence C. Loh,
MD, MPH, FCFP, FRCPC, FACPM
Medical Officer of Health, The Region of Peel – Public Health

Dr. Lawrence C. Loh gave an inspirational and encouraging speech about how we have adapted to the changes associated with COVID-19 and how to move towards a brighter 2021 by being stronger together. During his career, Dr. Loh has predominantly worked in chronic disease prevention and medical ethics. Being an avid runner himself, he has focused mainly on policies promoting healthy behaviors. At the beginning of 2020, he was responsible for all public health activities in Peel Region except pandemic management. On March 14, 2020, he was assigned as the medical officer for Peel Region. He was then up for the new challenge of managing everything including the COVID-19 pandemic.

During his speech, Dr. Loh explored how we, as a community, grew together during this time and how much we have learned along the journey. As we stand today, we have so much more experience as medical and social communities in addressing and controlling the pandemic. He also emphasized how this is a time of inequity and disparity where the voices of many vulnerable people are being unheard. His words deeply reflect our current pandemic scenario.

Related Global Health Event



CanGlobal Health News

Amalgamation of Canadian Society for International Health (CSIH) and Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research (CCGHR) and formation a single Canadian global health organization named Canadian Association for Global Health (CAGH) to unified efforts for greater impact.

ITMD Publications

AKM Alamgir, S. Usmani, Shafi Bhuiyan and Axelle Janczur. Structuring a Communication Framework to Address the Challenges of Vulnerable Communities for Building Trust and Ensuring Access to Emergency Health Messages for Compliance during COVID-19. EC Emergency Medicine and Critical Care 5.2 (2021): 07-16.

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Shafi Bhuiyan, Housne Begum, Khalid Niazi, Eiman Ali, Ishraq Tashkandi, Elahe Ranjbar, Mariano Rubharajan and Hana'a Badran. A Narrative Review of Selected Literature on the Management of Thromboembolism in Patients with COVID-19. EC Emergency Medicine and Critical Care 5.3 (2021): 17-26.