



PRESS RELEASE

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Vidya Swaminathan, PhD Recognized for Commitment to Global Health

[Washington, DC – April 7, 2011] Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO) is pleased to announce that Vidya Swaminathan, PhD, is a recipient of the sixth annual *HVO Golden Apple Award*. As part of its World Health Day observances, HVO created this award to recognize the extraordinary educational contributions of volunteers to international program sites. Each volunteer honored with this award has demonstrated a strong commitment to HVO's educational mission by working on curriculum development, teacher training, didactic or clinical training, or the enhancement of educational resources.

Dr. Vidya Swaminathan served as a Pfizer Global Health Fellow with the School of Health Sciences, Department of Pharmacy at Makerere University and the affiliated Mulago National Referral and Teaching Hospital in Uganda. Her six months of service truly made a sustainable difference in pharmacy education and training in Uganda.

During her six month fellowship, Dr. Swaminathan taught students, mentored junior faculty in developing research skills and projects, reviewed the academic and training curriculum, and made recommendations for improving its quality and making it more responsive to public health needs in Uganda. Swaminathan worked with the Dean and faculty to define and prioritize the Department's capacity goals for strengthening its academics, building sustainable research, and expanding its response to public health needs. She found and made the department aware of resources—in particular, resources available locally with a view to sustainability—for addressing its capacity-building and strengthening goals; these comprised open access health information sources, fellowships and grants available through existing capacity-building projects in the country and region, and opportunities for strategically leveraging academic, training and internship programs to address the critical shortage of trained workers in key areas impacting public health. Swaminathan reached out to the National Drug Authority of Uganda and the local pharmaceutical industry to identify areas of collaboration with the University on educational, training, and research programs aimed at improving the overall quality of pharmaceutical healthcare services delivered to the community.

A graduate of Purdue University's School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Dr. Swaminathan works at Pfizer in Research and Development.

The World Health Organization's Global Health Workforce Alliance has stated, "Health workers are the heart and soul of health systems. And yet, the world is faced with a chronic shortage – an estimated 4.2 million health workers are needed to bridge the gap, with 1.5 million needed in Africa alone. The critical shortage is recognized as one of the most fundamental constraints to achieving progress on health and reaching health and development goals." They estimate that one billion in the world will never see a health worker in their lives.

"I am very pleased that the contributions made by Vidya Swaminathan towards improving pharmaceutical services are being recognized with this award," said Nancy Kelly, HVO's Executive Director. "By highlighting the accomplishments of volunteers like Dr. Swaminathan, we hope to raise awareness of global health issues and encourage others to work towards better health care around the world."

World Health Day is celebrated annually by the World Health Organization and the international community. Since 1950, it has been held each year on April 7th and focuses on a relevant global health issue. This year's theme is "Antimicrobial resistance: No action today, no cure tomorrow" which will promote the safeguarding of medicines for future generations. For more information on World Health Day 2011, visit (<http://www.who.int/world-health-day/2011/en/index.html>).

A private, non-profit organization, HVO was founded in 1986 to improve global health through education. HVO designs and implements clinical education programs in child health, primary care, trauma and rehabilitation, essential surgical care, oral health, blood disorders and cancers, infectious disease, nursing education, and wound care. In more than 25 resource-poor nations, volunteers train, mentor, and provide critical professional support to health care providers who care for the neediest populations in the most difficult of circumstances. For more information about volunteering, visit the HVO [website](#).

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