

CHARITY FOCUS

OUR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

I was inspired to get involved with the Akshaya Patra Foundation after attending a networking evening in September. The words of the Chief Executive at that event were thought provoking, as he explained that it was our 'social responsibility' to help others. I felt compelled to become one of the first UK student ambassadors for the charity. Akshaya Patra is a charity that aims to fight hunger and enable children to access education: tackling two major global issues. The charity works across ten states in India in collaboration with the Indian Government, and is the largest non-profit school meal provider in the world. Just £10 can provide a child in India with a hot and nourishing school lunch every day for an entire year through Akshaya Patra's 'Food For Education' Programme.

During the summer, I set up a nationwide student representative scheme with Heart Your Smile. I elected 14 student representatives across five universities. My aim was to elect more representatives in the London universities, to support my idea of holding talks at King's College London. I gave my committee the option to support my work with Akshaya Patra, which they kindly accepted.

I organised and hosted three talks across the academic year and charged on a ticket basis for all the lectures, which I also sought sponsorship for.



Ajay with speaker Leah Totton

The first evening seminar was on the topic of back pain and was held in November. We were given invaluable advice from a specialist and a dually qualified physiotherapist and osteopath, Robert Shanks. He provided insightful tips on how to prevent and manage back pain.

The next event I organised took place in January and was titled 'The Business of Dentistry', and comprised of four speakers: winner of 'The Apprentice' and Lord Sugar's business partner - Leah Totton, a dental practice builder - Simon Tucker, a young entrepreneur from the last series of 'The Apprentice' - Jenny Garbis, and a successful practice owner - Dr Nav Ropra. This event had an impressive audience of 330 attendants, proving to be a success.

The most recent seminar was held in February, discussing the topic of oral hygiene advice for patients. This was given by Claire McCarthy, a dental hygienist and tutor at King's, and by a Colgate representative, who kindly provided each delegate with a free electric toothbrush. All the speakers were extremely generous in giving their time and support for these lectures.

The £1,500 raised through tickets sales for the three talks, as well as other donations provided by family and friends, means I have raised a total of £2,750. This gift will be used to feed lunches to a whole school of 200 to 300 children in Gujarat, India every day for a year. I have contacted Colgate who will provide this school with toothbrushes and toothpaste. My long-term aim is to continue to support this school throughout my life. I wish to connect Heart Your Smile and Akshaya Patra by setting up elective schemes for students to provide healthcare in these schools, which after food and education is the next most important step.

If you would like to get involved as a student, volunteer, supporter or even speaker for future talks then please email me on ajay.mehta@kcl.ac.uk.

For more information about The Akshaya Patra Foundation, visit www.foodforeducation.org.uk

BY AJAY MEHTA



Ajay with speaker Jenny Garbis

ORAL HEALTH CHARITY RENAMED TO REFLECT GLOBAL OUTLOOK

Oral health charity the British Dental Health Foundation has officially changed its name to the Oral Health Foundation. The change came into effect on 4 April 2016 and follows a growing demand the charity has had in recent years to deliver greater support, information and education on oral health throughout the world.

The charity's name change reflects the significantly broader reach and influence it has established globally since its formation,



Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive of the Oral Health Foundation, and Janet Goodwin, current President, unveiling the British Dental Health Foundation's new name

and will allow them to further strengthen their ultimate mission of providing better oral health for all.

Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive of the Oral Health Foundation, said: 'For more than four decades our biggest strength has been providing education and information on oral health to millions of people throughout the United Kingdom, so it only makes sense for us to expand and try deliver this on a global scale.'