



HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL

DEPARTMENT OF GLOBAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL MEDICINE

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Canadian Federation of Medical Students
267 O'Connor Street, Suite 401
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1V3
CANADA

To the Canadian Federation of Medical Students on the occasion of your 2014 Annual General Meeting:

I might have addressed this letter to “Canada’s future medical leaders,” but that would be incorrect, because you are clearly leaders already. On behalf of all of us at Partners In Health, thank you for considering a strategic partnership with PIH Canada, and thank you for your commitment to integrating an equity agenda into your activities today and beyond.

I was a third-year medical student when, along with a few like-minded friends, I co-founded Partners In Health nearly 30 years ago. As you know, it does not require an advanced medical degree nor years of specialty training to understand that the benefits of modern medical science do not reach all those who need them in an equitable way. It is our collective responsibility to correct this state of affairs as part of our lifelong work.

This June, I was privileged to spend a day at the University of Toronto and had an opportunity to discuss these issues with students from a number of faculties, including medicine. Also in Toronto that day was my esteemed Haitian colleague, Dr. Kerling Israel, Director of Medical Education for Partners In Health/Zanmi Lasante, PIH’s sister organization in Haiti. In an interview that appeared on the PIH Canada website, Dr. Israel said: “I am proud of the social justice attitude I see in my residents....They understand the message that they are not just doctors, but they can be agents of change.”

I wish this for you as well. Be agents of change, for your patients in Canada or wherever you may work. But be agents of change also for the legions of physicians and health professionals in developing countries who, at the moment, do not have the same opportunities for training and learning and mentoring as you and I had, nor the equipment or facilities that allow them to serve their patients with dignified, high quality care. I hope that, through a CFMS partnership with PIH Canada, together we can mobilize resources that make change happen here as well.

I am heartened to know that students in the CFMS Global Health Program are our partners in the fight for health equity and social justice. You promote global health education, sexual and reproductive health, Indigenous health, and global health advocacy in Canada and around the world. Thank you for your commitment and solidarity, and thank you for being my retirement plan.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul E. Farmer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "F".

Paul E. Farmer, MD, PhD

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