

## Sample Package – Student Humanitarian Award Nomination with a Letter of Support

*This form should be replicated/copied on computer by the nominator. The numbering and heading system shown herein should be followed:*

**Name of Person/Team Being Nominated:** Ashwin Mallipatna  
Program/Department/Division: Ophthalmology/Retinoblastoma  
Mailing Address: Eye Clinic, 555 University Avenue, Toronto, ON  
Postal Code: M5G 1X8  
Telephone No: 416-813-1874  
Email: ashwin.mallipatna@sickkids.ca

### Nominated by:

**1. Name:** Elise Héon  
SickKids Staff Member  Patient Family Member   
Program/Department/Division: Ophthalmology  
Mailing Address: Eye Clinic, 555 University Avenue, Toronto, ON  
Postal Code: M5G 1X8  
Telephone No: 416-813-8606  
Email: elise.heon@sickkids.ca

**2. Name:** Brenda Gallie  
SickKids Staff Member  Patient Family Member   
Program/Department/Division: Ophthalmology/Retinoblastoma  
Mailing Address: Eye Clinic, 555 University Avenue, Toronto, ON  
Postal Code: M5G 1X8  
Telephone No: 416-813-5868  
Email: brenda.gallie@sickkids.ca

### Name of Program Director or Department/Division Head that supports this nomination:

Name: Andrea Haslehurst  
Position at SickKids: Child Health Services Director

**Please answer the following questions using as many examples as possible. Candidates about whom the Selection Committee has little information will be disadvantaged. Students will have demonstrated some or all of the values listed in the questions below. The nomination must provide clear examples of how the individual has consistently demonstrated these qualities in an exceptional manner.**

**1. How long and in what capacity have you known the Nominee?**

Dr. Mallipatna is an ophthalmologist trained in India and who came to SickKids three years ago for training in pediatric ophthalmology. Throughout his Fellowships, we have all much appreciated the dedication of Ashwin to the details that matter so much to families distressed by severe illness in the children. His clinical care is excellent, leaving no detail to chance, ranging from the medical and surgical care, to investigating and following up on lab reports. But most importantly, he is extraordinary in communicating with the families, and reach out to assist all possible organization and support when they return home, often far from SickKids. Indeed he has taught all of us how to follow up and how meaningful those details are to the best outcomes for the children.

**2. How has the Nominee provided exceptional care and attention to families while working as a student at SickKids? (These values include understanding, respect and support the pivotal role parents play in the lives of their children.)**

Dr. Mallipatna has revamped the structure of our program improving our accountability and ensuring optimal follow-up of the patients. He has been following all patients on a personal basis for their medical as well as their social needs. In addition to this, Dr. Mallipatna has researched and investigated the use of novel technologies that could benefit patients who could not having access to the sophisticated care provided here in Toronto. He has been available 24/7 to all retinoblastoma families and has gone way yond the call of duty in meeting their needs. Families who have a child affected with this condition can become destabilized for quite some time and he has been a model in managing anxiety crises affecting parents and family members.

**3. Show an example of how the Nominee understands the social, emotional, and developmental impact of illness and hospitalization on the child and family:**

An example is the management of the recurrent infection behind the artificial eye a little boy who list his eye to retinoblastoma. Ashwin took fresh cultures and followed them to the lab to get the best consultation and advice that revealed a multi-drug resistant organism. He then actively worked for availability where the child lives, far from SickKids, to obtain the special drug needed. He also discovered that the little boy was not going to school because of the social stigma of the discharge from the artificial eye, and is presently actively enlisting help from the community to solve this problem. In this way, his actions to help families (phone calls, coming 24/7 to the hospital

to check them or solve crises) are above and beyond the care provided by the usual trainee.

4. ***What differentiates this individual apart from other students in terms of acting above and beyond what is expected of them?***

Dr. Mallipatna truly enjoys interaction with the babies and children. He is always smiling and playing with them, in a gentle and respectful way, treating them like whole people who are just now small, with special needs. The children respond brilliantly to him, offering cooperation and respect in turn for him when asks them to help so he can help them. In this way he stands out from many other trainees, who generally find themselves too busy, and may be shy or not able to become close to the children.

5. ***How does this individual work with other members of the team? (Examples would include how they collaborate and communicate meaningfully with all members of the interdisciplinary team; exhibit professional behavior tempered by humility.)***

Dr. Mallipatna has been extremely collaborative and has organized pathology rounds so that pathologists and clinicians can further discuss the disease affecting our patients. He is autonomous in that he clearly understands what is required of him and manages to be ahead of the curve. He is extremely caring and professional. He is good with junior trainees and any peers, sharing everything he has learned.

6. ***Has the Nominee used his or her professional experience in the Hospital to help the community? i.e. – is there anything that would be relevant to humanitarianism – for example volunteer work?***

Dr. Mallipatna had done community work, establishing vision assessment programs in deprived areas around Bangalore. He has an interest in cancer specifically retinoblastoma and came to Toronto to specifically obtain the highest level of training in this area and to return to his country India and set up this program. Following his pediatric ophthalmology fellowship, Dr. Mallipatna was selected as a HealthyKids International Fellow so he can pursue his education focusing on the diagnosis, management and care of patients affected with retinoblastoma, the most common malignant eye cancer in children.

Dr. Mallipatna is a natural teacher and he wishes to bring these qualities back to his country in order to set up several retinoblastoma programs in a country that has the highest incidence of this cancer in the world.

In addition to his accomplishments during this time at SickKids, he has managed to apply for volunteer missions in Pakistan and Ghana to go and provide ophthalmic care to deprived individuals. Unfortunately because of the political situation, the mission to Pakistan was cancelled to his great distress.

Dr. Mallipatna is very actively preparing for his return to Bangalore. He will build community strength in early diagnosis and shared care. He will promote multidisciplinary care, a key organizational structure to build a smooth path

for families. He is at SickKids scientifically laying the groundwork for a technology to recognize the earliest signs of retinoblastoma by photographic screening and initiating with an equally motivated medical student a large screening project in India to be carefully planned to show the most effective detection strategies. He is concerned and seeking solutions for the devastating impact that poverty has on access of families to the care their child needs.

Attn: Ms. Pam Gilliland  
National Grants  
Sick Kids Foundation  
525 University Avenue, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON M5S 1L3

**Re: Student Humanitarian Awards**

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Dear Selection Committee,

I am writing to you in the hopes that you will reward Dr. Mallipatna Ashwin with the Student Humanitarian Award of 2009.

My son Leonardo was diagnosed with trilateral retinoblastoma during the summer of 2007 and as such, the majority of his intense treatment protocol occurred before Dr. Ashwin joined the Retinoblastoma Team at Sick Kids. I am therefore not writing to you as much with regards to the patient care my son has received, but more so with regards to our collaboration on a retinoblastoma project.

I have had the extreme pleasure of working with Dr. Ashwin and the Retinoblastoma team to try to further parental awareness of photoleukocoria, a white haze which can present itself in flash photographs in the affected eye(s) instead of a normal red eye reflex. As the use of cameras have become more widespread, photoleukocoria has become an incredibly important piece of the retinoblastoma puzzle, often rendering the first warning sign of this disease to parents. Unfortunately because retinoblastoma is such a rare disease, this warning sign is often either missed or disregarded until the condition becomes more serious which is why increasing awareness of this eye cancer is so essential.

As my son was diagnosed as a direct result of a photograph, I have made it my mission to try to enlist imaging industry corporations to participate in an awareness campaign. Thankfully I had some success doing just that but of course needed to have the backing of competent professionals to not only confirm the facts, but to actively participate in the awareness campaign itself. I was soon invited to meetings with the retinoblastoma team to discuss the project and it is at this point that I met Dr. Ashwin.

From our initial meeting to the many brainstorming sessions that have followed since the summer of 2008, the wonderful welcoming atmosphere has always remained the same. I can not thank Ashwin (as I have come to call him) enough for not only being incredibly supportive, but for being able to deliver such insightful information in an objective manner. Many positive things have come from it and we have now secured the support of the Canadian Imaging Trade Association to our cause. Not only has Dr. Ashwin already delivered a presentation at a critical meeting, but he has also volunteered to be of assistance in the future as we meet with PR agencies and take other important steps forward.

To complement this awareness project, Dr. Ashwin has undertaken a photoleukocoria study, thereby providing solid scientific evidence of this effect and what the optimal

conditions are for red eye reflex and/or leukocoria detection. The intent is of course not to use a camera as a diagnostic tool, but rather to empower parents further in their quest to keep their children safe. Just about every retinoblastoma parent I have met at the hospital has expressed regret and sometimes even guilt for not reacting to leukocoria when it was evident. It is therefore such a relief to see Dr. Ashwin work so tirelessly, clearly spending much of his own spare time trying to ensure parents are spared this agony by perfecting the study, perfecting his presentations and working to ensure the campaign will be a success.

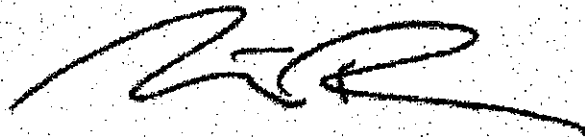
Dr. Ashwin is also guiding a Student in a pilot study that will take place in India over the next year. This extension to the current project will allow the optimal red eye-producing camera to be tested in the field alongside red eye reflex screening in population-based vaccination programs. The intent is to determine if cameras could be used by nurses to alert them to an abnormal red eye reflex as they attend vaccination stations, schools and visit remote villages. It is not known if red eye reflex screening by a trained pediatricians or photoleukocoria screening with remote expert analysis will be most effective. However, this could lead to a very valuable tool where resources are scarce, trained professionals too limited and locations very remote.

Dr. Ashwin's work could therefore be even more instrumental in saving the lives of children who simply do not have access to the kind of screening and treatment we are accustomed to here in Canada. It is not difficult to see Dr. Ashwin's passion for retinoblastoma and his extraordinary compassion for the children and the families affected by it. What sets him apart even further from the rest is his very genuine positive demeanor which can be quite contagious.

It has truly been a wonderful experience to work with Dr. Ashwin. As a mother of a child who's been battling eye cancer and a malignant brain tumor, this collaboration has been exactly the kind of therapeutic experience the doctor ordered! It is incredibly refreshing to see that one doesn't need an impressive medical background or lengthy title in order to be treated as a valued member of the team. I couldn't be more proud to simply be "Leo's Mom".

Dr. Mallipatna Ashwin would be incredibly deserving of the Student Humanitarian Award.

Sincerely,



Maria Pezzente