

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Couple's life changing trip to India

**Husband and wife team, Brian and Nicki Hurwitz, had an experience of a lifetime when they returned to India in February as dental and allied health volunteers with Perth based organisation Equal Health.**

Along with their daughter, Romy, a Sydney based paediatrician, and a team of 46 health professional volunteers, they provided free health care appointments to more than 7,000 people in need of dental, medical, optical and allied health care.

The lasting and profound difference to people's lives that access to health care can make was made very real to Nicki when, along with the allied health team, she delivered three new donated wheelchairs to a mental health care institution in Katwa, northern India.

"As Head of Allied Health, many of the highlights were not my own, yet part of the job I did in facilitating the work that my absolutely outstanding team did," said speech pathologist Mrs Nicki Hurwitz.

"The way they put together the hard terrain wheelchairs that we brought with us, and adjusted them to serve three extremely disabled residents, was awe inspiring. I think the highlight of my trip was to see Annamika drag herself into her chair and independently take herself on a tour of the [mental health care institution] site, her face wrapt in an exulted expression of delight, with the broadest smile you ever saw. The memory of it still brings tears to my eyes ... I think that my experiences in India have had a life changing impact on my view of the world and my appreciation of the wonderful life I and my privileged children have in Australia."

As a dentist, Brian had a similar experience, "One is reminded of some very fearful [dental] patients who are persuaded to undergo treatment and after gentle handling are almost tearfully grateful," said Dr Brian Hurtwitz.

Australian not for profit organisation Equal Health (est 1997) brings sight to the blind, relief from dental pain and improved health to some of the world's most vulnerable people in developing countries such as India and East Timor. Providing access to health care can make a lasting and profound difference to people's lives.

Working with Indian partner agencies, Equal Health conducts annual two-week camps in India each February, made possible by teams of Australian health professionals who volunteer their skills and services to improve the health and lives of people living in India's rural communities.

Equal Health founder, Paul Clarke travelled with the team for the 17th time this February and says times are tough.

"While volunteer enthusiasm is high, fundraising is proving more challenging," Paul said.

"Our volunteers' hard work, dedication and commitment are fundamental to the success of Equal Health. However, the current economic climate is proving to be our most difficult time for procuring and maintaining funding support. Over the past two years our cash donations have dropped to alarmingly low levels due to greatly increased competition and harder economic times."



*A life changing appointment*

Equal Health's 'Friends of Equal Health' monthly investment program provides opportunities for people and companies to invest in Equal Health's work, through committing to a tax deductible monthly donation of an amount of their choice.

"For the price of a cup of coffee a day (\$50 a month), people can provide funds for 120 health appointments," said Paul.

All funds raised from this program will be directly invested in Equal Health's ongoing operations.

For more information visit [www.equalhealth.org.au](http://www.equalhealth.org.au)

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