



International Center *for* Equal Healthcare Access
The global leader in clinical skills rapid transfer to emerging nations

ICEHA Awarded National Medal of Honor by Vietnamese Government

Dr. Marie Charles, Chair & CEO of The International Center for Equal Healthcare Access (ICEHA), received the National Medal of Honor from the Vietnamese government for her global leadership in sustainable healthcare development in emerging nations and ICEHA's enormous impact on the Vietnamese healthcare system.

ICEHA (www.ICEHA.org) has been working in Vietnam since 2002 at the invitation of the Vietnamese government. Prior to any other international aid organizations understanding that developing countries are in dire need of trained healthcare workers, ICEHA decided to tap into the abundance of medical expertise in the West and make it available on a pro bono basis to the developing countries.

"I cannot tell you how many Vietnamese lives ICEHA volunteers have saved. We are so grateful for the clinical mentors you have sent to Vietnam," says Dr. Peter Vu Ngoc Son who as a Program Officer for Family Health International is assisting his government with making AIDS care available in his country.

Drawing on its pool of more than 550 of the most highly qualified infectious disease medical professionals in the world, ICEHA deployed into 11 countries within just 3 years of commencing operations and is now transferring over 6,000 aggregate man years of the highest level professional medical expertise to emerging nations on three continents. This international charity works by recruiting HIV healthcare providers from all over the world to work with local providers. Some of the world's top HIV/AIDS experts work for free for ICEHA and the impact they see of their work is immense.

"I recently went back to visit the clinics I mentored in Lesotho. Patients were chasing me down in the streets, coming to my door and approaching me at church to show me how well they were doing. I didn't recognize most of them except for their eyes because their bodies had regenerated into another (healthier) form! When I was there as a mentor at the start of treatment, most of what I saw was tragic. I was so blessed to go back and be able to see the positive results of all the work." comments Julie Ahlrich, a nurse practitioner and former ICEHA Clinical Mentor.

A serial social entrepreneur, Marie has worked on some of the toughest AIDS programs in the world. She founded ICEHA at a time when the attention of the world was primarily focused on drug costs and dollar amounts as the solution to the AIDS epidemic, ignoring the vast lack of healthcare delivery systems with millions of people dying as a result. "Our job is to give developing countries access to some of the most invaluable yet unutilized resources available in the West (medical expertise) so that they do not have to rely indefinitely on donor help, but instead can run their own systems and provide healthcare to their own populations," says Marie. "Ultimately ICEHA's goal is to put itself out of business, having created access to care for millions when none existed prior."

In the presence of the Chairman, the prime minister of Vietnam, the minister of Health and the minister of education, Dr. Charles received the National Medal of Honor at the opening ceremony of the National Assembly meeting on June 5th in Hanoi. The ceremony was also broadcast on national Vietnamese TV.

ICEHA's work with the Government of Viet Nam and the Highland Education Development Organization (HEDO) has brought new HIV/AIDS expertise to the public healthcare system. Over the past 5 years, ICEHA has conducted HIV training programs for over 700 Vietnamese



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physicians. The trainings have been held in Langson, Lao Cai, Ninh Binh, Bac Giang, and Hoa Binh provinces. Beyond basic HIV training, ICEHA clinical mentors working in partnership with Family Health International have provided hands-on clinical mentoring to an additional 125 healthcare workers in nine hospitals in Northern and Southern Vietnam for more than 90 weeks continuously. As a direct result of ICEHA's work, the attitudes of healthcare providers towards HIV infected patients have changed radically and HIV care is now being provided by local healthcare workers.

"ICEHA's training program taught us – infectious diseases doctors - not to be afraid any longer of our HIV-infected patients! You have given us the tools that we can apply to our clinics tomorrow, even if we may not yet have the antiretroviral medication available," Says Dr. Nguyen Van Ngoc, M.D., Vice-Director, Hoa Binh Provincial Hospital, Vietnam

Prevention messages are being delivered to the public, the incidence of unsafe medical practices has decreased, and HIV care and treatment have been greatly enhanced. This program has been highlighted extensively in local and international media.

ICEHA also uses a unique empowerment-sustainability funding model, whereby Western funding catalyzes a 300% matched funding by the recipient developing countries themselves. Ongoing funds are needed to continue this important work in Vietnam.



Left to Right: Mr. Nguyen Minh Triet, President of Vietnam; Dr. Marie Charles, Chair and CEO of ICEHA; and Mr. Nguyen Thien Nhan, Minister of Education of Vietnam