



## **VELLORE NEWSLETTER**

### **FRIENDS OF VELLORE CHRISTIAN MEDICAL COLLEGE & HOSPITAL (QLD)**

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(Qld FOV is a branch of the Australian Board of the Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital)

#### **Dear Friends,**

A recent publication from the Christian Medical College and Hospitals in Vellore has statistics which help us see how it is possible to estimate that behind the walls around the Main Hospital compound there will be about 30,000 people on any working day. First time visitors being taken on the Hospital tour do not doubt that figure!

#### **Daily in CMC:**

Outpatients	6,183
Laboratory tests	25,635
Operations	125

For the year it means that nearly 2 million outpatients are seen, total inpatient days are just over 120,000, occupying the 2,695 beds. There are 1,290 doctors and 2,481 nurses, plus administration, chaplaincy, engineering, social work and non-medical teaching and technical staff of a further 4196.

#### **We invite you and your friends to:**

#### **THE ANNUAL MEETING OF QLD FRIENDS OF VELLORE**

at the home of our Secretary, Mrs Gwenda Spencer, at 22 Elgata Street, The Gap.

**2 pm Sunday, 6 November, 2011**

**RSVP to:** Gwenda Spencer 33001542 ([gwendaspencer@hotmail.com](mailto:gwendaspencer@hotmail.com)) or  
Brian Lee 33513272 ([jblee19@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jblee19@bigpond.net.au))  
before 1 November

## **AUSTRALIAN VELLORE BOARD ANNUAL MEETING**

Queensland Friends of Vellore were pleased to welcome the members of the Australian Board for its annual meeting on 27 August. Very ably and genially chaired by Dr Ian Olver, the Board's President, this meeting included in its agenda a presentation by Dr Lionel Gnanaraj, Vellore's Medical Superintendent, who attended the meeting on behalf of the Director, Dr Suranjan Bhattacharji.



*Drs Frank Garlick, Lionel Gnanaraj and Ian Olver at the Board meeting*

The Board's Treasurer, Richard Caitens, reported that the total contributions from the State Friends of Vellore Groups amounted to \$154,809, \$60,000 of this amount coming from the Qld Friends. During the financial year \$120,635 was sent to CMC Vellore. Except for donations given through the Board for specific programs at CMC, this money is allocated as requested by the Director.

More than half, \$70,295, was paid into the Ida Scudder Centenary Endowment Fund, established in 2000 to help meet the expenses of patients not able to pay for their treatment. From time to time in this Newsletter there are stories of patients assisted by this Fund. The Person-to-Person Fund also received \$6844. See Magalaxmi's (p.4) and Selvi's (p.7) stories, both patients helped by the Person-to-Person Fund.

On behalf of all of you Queensland Friends, donors, stall workers and contributors, annual dinner organisers and others, our Committee has dared to promise another \$60,000 for 2011-12.

## **TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS BY BANK TRANSFER**

People wishing to donate to CMC Vellore may find it more convenient to pay by Bank transfer rather than by cheque. Our Treasurer, Richard Caitens, has provided the following information:

**Account name:** Friends of Vellore Christian Medical College & Hospital Queensland Group Support Fund

**BSB no.:** 633000

**Account no.:** 131073413

**Reference:** Your surname and suburb (or as much as space allows)

After making the transfer, please send an email regarding your deposit to the Treasurer at this email address: [cmcvellore@optusnet.com.au](mailto:cmcvellore@optusnet.com.au) so a receipt can be sent to you.



***CMC Hospital from the air***

## **LOCAL FUNDRAISING TO HELP POOR PATIENTS**

Not all support for the treatment of poor people comes from outside India. In September a Chennai-based musical group gave a concert in the Scudder Auditorium which raised the equivalent of about AUD\$7500 for this purpose.

The Handel Manuel Chorus presented “From Kyrie to Calypso: The Evolution of Sacred Music” which included church music from 8<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This musical group is named after a gifted Indian musician, Padmashri Prabhu Handel Manuel, a self-taught pianist and organist who, among other things, was organist and choir master at the Kirk St Andrews Church, Chennai for 50 years.

This event was organised by CMC’s Development Office Fund.

### **MAGALAKSHMI'S STORY – TO SAVE A BABY'S LIFE**

Magalakshmi is from an impoverished rural family near CMC's Rural Unit for Health and Social Action (RUHSA). Her husband, Selvam, is an agricultural labourer on about \$25 a month. Their house is a simple mud and thatch structure. Her first two babies were still born and the third, a girl, lived just a few days. The fourth, an eagerly anticipated boy, has survived and then another girl, safely delivered in the RUHSA Hospital where it was immediately clear there were problems.

She needed more specialist treatment than RUHSA could provide so she was referred to the Paediatric Surgery Department at CMC's Main Hospital.

Selvam, the father, had the deeply ingrained prejudices of many with his background. He had refused to allow treatment for his third child, a girl, and now he agreed only on the understanding that he would pay nothing for this girl either.



*The Critical Care Nursery*

This tiny baby had a delicate operation to clear a blockage in the small intestine followed later by a further abdominal operation. Nine days later she was discharged, the bill coming to Rs 7,840 (AU\$200) – eight month's pay for that family.

It has always been a CMC policy that no child with a treatable condition should be turned away just because the family cannot afford it. In spite of repeated protestations, Selvam relented and raised \$25 towards the cost. \$100 was added from the Person-to-Person Fund and the rest of the cost was met from the Hospital's internal funds

Magalakshi is truly grateful for the care and generosity of the staff and of well wishers around the world who have shown the love of God for her baby daughter in her time of great need.

## **THE TALE OF THE MISSING TOOTH**

*(adapted from a story in the UK Vellore Newsletter)*

Manoj Sharma, 25, looked an extremely thin, emaciated and sickly 16 year old when he first came to Vellore from his home near Kolkata (Calcutta).

Some years earlier he was given a removable denture in place of a lost front tooth. One day while drinking water he accidentally swallowed it – tooth, gum, clasp and all. When it became stuck down his windpipe his saga of suffering began.

Eating was a problem and he developed recurring pneumonia with a constant cough and chest pain. The tooth had penetrated the wall of the food pipe and had lodged there in such a way that both air and food passages were restricted.

From the village clinic he went to hospitals further away but no one seemed able to ease his discomfort. At the Calcutta Medical College he received temporary help but no one there could do the highly skilled surgery he needed. Soon a cough and lung infections became his constant companions. With his brother Sanoj he travelled to Bangalore but again there was no one who would attempt that operation. People from his village helped as they could with travel and hospital costs and Manoj's family sold their valuables and steadily sank into poverty.

But Manoj refused to give up hope. Someone suggested CMC Vellore so he and Sanoj went there. Manoj had no money left and was coughing continuously. If he was turned away from here, he would surely soon die.

At the CMC Hospital, by a comparatively simple procedure he was able to be fed through his stomach. After regaining some strength and stamina at home he came back for the reconstruction of his oesophagus which involved major surgery costing \$3750.

When the wound healed he was fed small amounts of fluids, then semi-solids and subsequently soft solids, a pure delight for Manoj who was now able to taste food once again.

Two years after the original incident he was eating and drinking normally and was able to return home again to join a family ever so grateful for his new lease of life.

He kept the footloose denture, the cause of so much misery, and has it framed in his house!

## **A SPECIAL INDIAN WAY OF HELPING THE MENTALLY ILL**

Very early on it became evident that the available funds, space and trained personnel were inadequate to support the traditional way of hospital based, intensive and long term management of chronic mental illnesses. It became apparent that rehabilitation services had to be relevant to the local needs and that the special challenges posed by poverty would have to be addressed in a concrete way.

The founder of a Vellore local non-profit organisation (known as UU) introduced CMC psychiatric staff to the way the community was responding to cases of mental illness and invited them to interview any mentally ill person found on the 3km stretch from the College Campus to the heart of Vellore city. Almost all of these, sitting on the side of the street, dishevelled and apparently in isolation, were in fact being fed, clothed and sheltered to varying extents by shopkeepers and local households. Children playing nearby were able to describe how far they wandered and what talents they had. Concerned local folk joined the conversation initiated by the psychiatrist and the founder of UU to make sure the mentally ill person was not being threatened.

Over the last three years the CMC psychiatrists have contributed to the treatment and rehabilitation of over 180 destitute men and women by merely joining the circle of caring people who organised themselves around those needing help. Small voluntary organisations like UU as well as larger established organisations like the Missionaries of Charity are able to gather people off the streets, feed, bathe and clothe them and administer necessary medicines provided by CMC. The Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Unit has also provided training for general practitioners, social work students and community volunteers in the basics of psychiatry.

## **COLLEGE MOTTO AWARD FOR 2011**

For the last 6 years, each year the life and work of a Vellore graduate who, within 25 years of graduation, has best exemplified CMC's motto, "Not to be served, but to serve." is recognised by this Award.

After years of fine service as a physician and surgeon, Dr Joyothula Joseph Samuel took up a unique opportunity to serve people who suffer not just physically but also mentally, socially, economically and spiritually. In 2004, at Chandrakal, in the interior of Andhra Pradesh, he helped a struggling Mission Hospital become one of the few focussing on persons living with HIV/AIDS. "His work rekindled light in people experiencing darkness." Then in 2007 he became Senior Medical Officer in another rural clinic "giving hope to those with no hope, and serving those whom few serve." For his life of steadfast faith in the face of his own illness and for translating that faith into significant service in the spirit of his alma mater, the CMC Alumni Association presented him with this Award.

## **SELVI'S IS A PERSON-TO-PERSON FUND STORY**

Selvi is one of the Jawadhi Hills people and this is her story. When she married, as part of a joint family they lived with her family. Selvi and her husband shared the work of cultivating a few acres of village land. She became pregnant and had a healthy baby son but things did not go so well during her second pregnancy. At 7 months she developed fever and breathlessness. Her village is a 45 min walk along a narrow track, wading two streams before reaching the road. Selvi's father went with her on the long walk then on the bus ride to Vellore's CHAD Hospital.

The CHAD doctor diagnosed pus in her lung needing her to go to the Medical Department in the main Hospital for treatment. She had been gravely ill and it was 10 days before she could make the arduous trip back home. Sadly this was not the last of her troubles. A few weeks later her husband suddenly became ill and died before help could be called. Soon she again had to take the long walk to the bus and at the Government Primary Health Centre 26kms away her second son was born.

Now Selvi has to depend on her family for daily living for herself and her two little ones. The Community Health Nurse and the technician now also take that long walk to check on Selvi and her babies. She is given help with breast feeding and nutrition and the babies are checked to see they are healthy and meeting the correct milestones.

Selvi's Hospital bill came to more than the equivalent of 400 Australian dollars, impossible for anyone in that poor community. By pawning her jewellery she raised a little over \$50. Wherever possible such patients are not turned away from CMC. The Person-to-Person fund contributed about \$100 and the balance was absorbed by the Hospital itself.

## **AVAILABLE VACCINATION – A GREAT LIFE SAVER**

Four CMC staff completed the Advanced Vaccinology Course held annually in France. Supported by the appropriate CMC faculties and Government of India Departments, a similar course, adapted for the Indian context, was held at CMC in September last year. Its success has encouraged the scheduling of a second course this year. As the course leaders address the training needs both in India and in other Low and Middle Income countries in the region, it has been opened to international participants, allowing for 10 of the 50 places to be filled from outside India. While a country like Australia talks of thousands to be vaccinated, India says millions, so the combined skill of experts in many fields is needed to deal with choice of vaccine, access to the supply chain, how the vaccination is given and the follow-up to gauge results.

These courses are particularly relevant to specialists in infectious diseases, paediatricians, physicians, research scientists, members of vaccination teams and vaccine industry professionals.

## **THE DVD “HOME OF A HEALING GOD”**

Copies are still available from Brian Lee (ph. 3351 3272 or [jblee19@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jblee19@bigpond.net.au)) for \$10 (including postage). It is a great resource to use to tell your friends about CMC Vellore, its people, its work and something of what makes it the great place it is. Copies will be available at the Annual Meeting on 6 November.

## **WEB SITES**

[www.australianfov.net.au](http://www.australianfov.net.au)

Vellore and USA sites: [www.cmch-vellore.edu](http://www.cmch-vellore.edu) & [www.vellorecmc.org](http://www.vellorecmc.org)

## **STREET STALL NEWS**

**Many thanks to new volunteers, and to those wonderful people who continue their many years of stall work. In recent months more than \$1500 a month has come just from these two stalls.**

Each of the Toowong and Tank Street stalls happen once a month. New helpers are always welcome. Continuing needs include:

- Suitable items for sale, especially cakes and biscuits
- Help with transporting the goods
- Workers at the stalls
  - regularly or now and again as you are able.

**If you, or someone you know, can help in this, kindly contact Mrs Claire Mainstone (3371 1332).**

For much of the material in these Newsletters I am again indebted to CMC’s weekly “Newslink” and to Mrs Ann Witchalls’ great stories about people whose lives are changed by what happens at CMC Vellore.

Regards, Brian  
(Newsletter Editor).

## **QLD FRIENDS OF VELLORE OFFICE BEARERS**

Chairman: Mrs Cathy Chandani, 24 Mathews St, Bethania 4205 (0412391353)  
 Vice Chairman: Rev John Hooper, 74 Meynell St, Salisbury 4107 (3701 0017)  
 Hon. Secretary: Mrs Gwenda Spencer, 22 Elgata St, The Gap 4061 (3300 1542)  
 Hon. Treasurer: Mr Richard Caitens, 107 Northgate Rd, Northgate 4013 (3266 1962)  
 Stalls Co-ordinator: Mrs Claire Mainstone, 37 Fifth Av, St Lucia, 4067 (3371 1332)  
 Publicity Officer &  
 Newsletter Editor: Rev Brian Lee, 19 Glencloy Street, Ferny Grove 4055 (3351 3272)