

# Friends of Vellore

NSW Division of the Australian Vellore Board

Supporting the work at



*Christian Medical College & Hospital, S.India*

**May 2010**

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Dear Friends,

It is almost a year since I wrote to you last. It is that time of the year when we send our annual appeal. As in the past years, we have received donations from many of you during the year. Your kind thoughts and generosity are very much appreciated.

## **AGM Australian Board**

We hosted the AGM of the Board in Sydney on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2009. The meeting was held at the Cancer Council headquarters in Surry Hills. The highlight of the meeting was the videoconference hook up we had with the Director of CMC, Prof. Suranjan Bhattacharji who provided an update on developments at CMC.

The main point he raised was that CMC is changing its model for delivering medical services. Due to the main campus being full, the current layout does not lead to efficient delivery of health services. The new approach will be based on primary and secondary health outstation and outpatient centres that undertake initial screenings and support after-care treatment for patients.

This will mean the main campus becoming a tertiary medical centre and teaching college and therefore a reduced need for patients to come to the main campus, with the associated travel and waiting time.

In the last financial year, CMC spent Rs.80crores (about \$2,000,000) on extension services for the local community. The expansion of the Low Cost Family Care program will depend on the development of IT communication links to ensure that patient records are centrally managed. There is also a plan to enhance the provision of allied health with development of the School of Allied Health Sciences.

As part of this changing process and in cooperation with the government of Andhra Pradesh, CMC will construct a new sub-campus at Chittoor, about 70km from Vellore. The site requires about 600 acres, with 450 acres already obtained and negotiations proceeding for additional land, which may eventually total about 1,000 acres. The land is arid and water availability and use will be a major design challenge.

This campus will most likely commence with primary and secondary rural health, allied health and the enhanced distance education centre. The rural health practice will develop the training program in Family Medicine to better equip doctors for practice in rural areas.

From the financial viewpoint, the Australian Friends of Vellore, in 2008-09 transferred to CMC \$280,000, with the main beneficiaries being \$137,284 for the Palliative Care Centre and \$98,716 for the Yelagiri Retreat Centre for students and staff. This was a magnificent effort by the FOV organisations around Australia.

One of the common themes which were raised by most of the states was that there was dwindling numbers in their support base. This is quite a serious issue in NSW. We still do have a hard core of financial supporters, but the numbers of people who have shown interest in receiving our newsletters have fallen over the years.

### **Curry Dinner**

We didn't get around to organising a curry dinner during the current financial year. But we did have a dinner to coincide with the AGM. About 60 people turned up for the lovely dinner at the St. John of God Hospital, Burwood. It gave us the opportunity to meet the interstate delegates who came for the meeting. Prof. Ian Olver, the chairman of the board briefed the gathering on the things which were discussed at the Board meeting. Thanks to John Rothwell for organising the delicious meal at a very reasonable cost.

### **Vellore News**

#### **CMC Joins With Government to Help the Poor**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> April Mr. Stalin, the Deputy Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu came to CMC to inaugurate a new program whereby poor people in the area around Vellore can come to CMC for treatment of serious illnesses with insurance coverage from the state government.



The Hindu newspaper reported: 'The Deputy Chief Minister said the insurance scheme had enabled the poor to get advanced surgical treatment that the rich got in the best hospitals in the State. Previously, the poor did not have the facility of advanced treatment in private hospitals, which the rich enjoyed.'

The implementation of this insurance plan is yet another reason for CMC to expand its treatment facilities both in Vellore and also in Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh. CMC is seeking approval from local Vellore authorities to build an impressive new Out Patient facility on the very spot where the ceremony took place. The land is currently used as a CMC parking lot.

It was agreed that CMC will accept patients with the government-backed insurance from four districts: Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri. The growth of publicly-supported insurance plans is part of an overall effort by Indian political leaders now in power to improve the lives of their poorest constituents.

## CMC Launches Second Campus



*Photos courtesy of Hugh Skell, CMC Development Office*

For the first time in its 110 year history, the Christian Medical College is opening a second campus. On Saturday, April 24 several hundred people gathered to celebrate this historic moment at a spot on the old Bangalore-Chennai highway, a few kilometers south of the town of Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh. It is here, on over 600 acres of land purchased from the government of Andhra Pradesh that CMC will build a facility that promises in the long run to equal or surpass the present Vellore location in size and importance.

CMC Director, Suranjan Bhattacharji, envisions a university of the health sciences, which will emphasize the connections between body and spirit, the secular and the sacred, the earthly and the divine. The April 24 event inaugurated construction of the boundary wall, the first step in opening the new property for use by CMC. Within three months, CMC expects to open the first clinic. Nurses will initiate health services with doctors arriving shortly thereafter.

The new campus is a twenty minute drive from Katpadi (Vellore) train station and a similar distance from a station at Chittoor. These rail facilities combined with the location on a highway will allow the new campus to serve patients from all over India as well as local villages. Approximately 600 patients a day come to CMC Vellore from the Chittoor area, and it is hoped that much of this flow can be re-directed to the new campus, relieving some of the pressure on Vellore outpatient clinics.

### Farewells

**Dr. George M Chandy**, Professor of Gastroenterology and Hepatology and former Director, retires after 27 years of committed service to the Institution. His career in CMC dates back to 1967, when he joined the college for the MBBS course. He obtained the MD (Internal Medicine) at CMC, Ludhiana, and joined CMC Vellore in the Department of Gastroenterology and obtained the DM degree in 1986. Since then, CMC has been his home, his mission and his calling.



George was appointed Professor in 1995 and headed the Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology from 1998 to 2002. His special interest was in hepatology and liver transplant, and his study leave in Australia in 1992-95 was devoted to these specific areas. He was initially at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Adelaide, and later in 1994 at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney.

His numerous publications in books and journals speak volumes of his contributions to his specialty. He has been involved with the Hepatitis B infection. It was at his initiative that the AHBAAS project (A Hepatitis B Awareness and Safety Initiative) was created that has made Vellore Town the first Hepatitis B free city in India.

Dr. George Chandy was Medical Superintendent of CMC from 1999 to 2002. He was appointed Director in September 2002, a post he held till 2007. He made a couple of visits to Australia during his tenure. His many initiatives during his term as the Director are too numerous to be listed here. The major ones include the CHRIS card scheme, developing the excellent A Block for private patients, expansion of ASHA Building to provide state of the art laboratory facilities; the new residential facilities on Rehab and College campus and many more.

Because of his deep commitment to medical mission, Dr. Chandy strengthened collaborations with several hospitals in India. It was during his tenure that the then President of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam visited CMC to lay the foundation stone of the Centre for Stem Cell Research. CMC was awarded the National Citizen's Award, the Gurukul Jyoti Award and the Madras Medical Mission Award for Excellence in Healthcare and maintained its ranking amongst the top three medical colleges in the country.

Dr. George Chandy's inspiring leadership was recognised when he was awarded the Dr. BC Roy National Award for Excellence in Healthcare in 2007, presented by Her Excellency Prathibha Patel. Far beyond these initiatives and achievements, George will undoubtedly be remembered for his gentleness, his faith, his personal touch and the kind words he had for all. His wife, Dr. Rachel Chandy, is Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

CMC and the world wide family of friends are indebted to George for his inspiring and devoted service. We wish him the very best in his retirement.

**Dr. Mammen Chandy**, professor of Haematology at CMC is retiring after being involved with the institution since 1966 when he joined as a medical student. After a brilliant record as a student, he commenced his post graduate training in Medicine in 1975 and joined the faculty of Medicine Unit 1 in 1979. By then he had decided to take up Haematology as a subspecialty and went to Sydney for formal training in the subject from 1980-83.

On his return, he gradually built up the Haematology service and in 1989 it was made a separate department. Even though Haematology had been practiced in CMC for several decades, it was Dr. Mammen who pioneered the modern management of leukemias and other blood cancers, bone marrow failure syndromes and comprehensive services for haemophilia and other bleeding disorders. He was the first to do bone marrow



transplantation in CMC in 1986 and subsequently initiated a program that can rightly claim to be the best in the country.

Dr Chandy also started the first bone marrow transplantation for thalassemia, and the full spectrum of services for haemoglobin disorders. He initiated research in the Department that was initially community based. He then raised the bar further to establish one of the best examples of translation molecular genetics research in a medical college in India. His efforts and work in the field were recognized and he was appointed Chair of the Task Force of the Department of Biotechnology of the Government of India

Dr. Chandy started the first formal training programme in Haematology in India, and its graduates provide some of the best Haematology services in the country. He was also able to initiate a PhD program in basic sciences as applied to haematological diseases. Through this, he was able to integrate basic science personnel to further enhance the standard of clinical services and research.

Dr. Mammen Chandy will be very much missed by the institution, his patients and as well by those of us around the world who has come to know him over the years. Our best wishes goes with him.

### **Annual Appeal**

I am herewith enclosing the annual appeal. We realise that at this time of the year you do get inundated with appeals from various charities. We have been fortunate that that most of you have upheld the work done at Vellore in your kind considerations. As I have mentioned in the past, every cent donated to the 'Christian Medical College and Hospital Support Fund' is sent to Vellore.

Not everyone who supports Vellore is employed and or is well off. One of the donations which I received last year brought tears to my eyes when someone who was on welfare sent us part of an 'extra' payment received from Centrelink.

Last year we received by way of donations a total of 12,800.00. Thank you all for your kind generosity.

Thanking you.

Best wishes

Stephen Aseervatham

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**Our Web Page**  
[www.Australianfov.net.au](http://www.Australianfov.net.au)

Please Visit our web page to get more information about Vellore and Activities of the various state branches of Friends of Vellore in Australia.

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