



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,

This Newsletter includes an invitation to the Qld Friends' Annual Meeting. This year it will be really special, in October instead of our usual November meeting, and it's on a Saturday morning. We will have with us a senior member of the CMC Vellore staff who will be our guest speaker and is available for that morning only. Feel free to invite others to come with you. **We would appreciate an early RSVP so we can organise the biscuits!**

You and your friends are invited to:

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF QLD FRIENDS OF VELLORE

at St Mark's Anglican Church, 1073 Waterworks Rd, The Gap

10.30am **Saturday, 30 October, 2010**

Guest Speaker: Dr Reena George (Palliative Care Unit, CMC Vellore)

RSVP to: Gwenda Spencer 33001542 (gwendaspencer@hotmail.com)
before 23 October

Dr Reena George gained her MB BS at CMC Vellore, then completed her MD in Radiation Oncology at the University of Delhi. In 1994 she returned to CMC to work in Radiation Oncology, becoming aware that there was nothing being done in the field of incurable cancer, so, after extra training, moved into Palliative Care. This unit was established at Vellore in 2003 and is featured in the "Home of a Healing God" DVD.

AUSTRALIAN VELLORE BOARD ANNUAL MEETING

Representatives from Queensland, NSW, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania met with the officers of the Board in Melbourne in August. An Associate Director of CMC Vellore, Dr Isaac Jebaraj, was welcomed to the meeting.

The Treasurer's report showed that the State Friends of Vellore groups contributed \$141,910.50, of which Qld FOV share was \$60,000. The total of \$140,000 forwarded to CMC included \$99,000 towards the development of the Yalagiri Retreat Centre and a further \$14,000 to the Ida Scudder Centenary Endowment Fund, which has been consistently supported by Australian friends for the last 10 years.

In his annual report the President, Dr Ian Olver, reminded the members of the Board that "We respond to the projects that CMC want us to do, in addition to the default funding going to support treatment for the poor, but again according to the priorities identified by those responsible at the Hospital". He said also, "Fundraising has changed and we need to embrace new methods, but it is not just about the funds but about forming the ongoing relationships which will help sustain the growth in capability in Vellore."

Renu John, a CMC Alumnus, along with Ivan Paul who attended the Annual Meeting, are working to form again a Friends of Vellore group in Western Australia.

SOME VELLORE GRADUATES IN AUSTRALIA

Dr Nitin Verma was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in this year's Queen's Birthday honours list for his services to Ophthalmology and humanitarian health care projects in the Pacific Region. When Dr Dayalan Devanesen was in the NT Health Department, he recruited Dr Verma from PNG as a rural ophthalmologist. He established strong links with the newly independent East Timor and now in Tasmania he is the consul general for that young nation.

Other Vellore graduates living in Australia are involved in providing ongoing support to medical services in mission hospitals in India and in other parts of the world. Some make short term specialist visits to hospitals in Vanuatu, Vietnam and North India.

Australia is the home also of a number of CMC trained doctors from Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Green Hospital in Manipay in which they had worked was destroyed during the fighting. It is now going to be rebuilt with the help of a Uniting Church in Australia agency. The Sri Lankan Vellore graduates in Australia expect to be involved.

Dr Annapurna Nori, a Public Health Physician in a S Aust. Aboriginal Controlled Health Organisation won a Telstra Business Women's Award late last year for her work to improve Aboriginal health standards.

ALL OVER THE WORLD — — — —

I get to talk to many Indians on Brisbane suburban trains these days and I find that almost all South Indians I speak to, and quite a few North Indians as well, know about CMC Vellore. It is rightly famous! But the August Alumni Reunion in Vellore gave a hint as to how widespread are the service to medicine and the reputation of this institution throughout the world. Students who began their training at CMC in 1945 and in every fifth year after that to 1985 were the special invitees to the Reunion this year. There were 160 altogether.

Returning Alumni came from India, U K, USA, Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Indonesia, West Indies, Switzerland, Namibia, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Zambia, South Africa and Bahrain.

— — — — AND THE WORLD COMES TO VELLORE

Because a steadily increasing number of foreign nationals come to CMC Vellore for treatment, an International Relations Office has been set up to meet their special needs. This office was inaugurated in July by Vellore's Superintendent of Police. Such patients come from different parts of the world but mainly from countries that, like India, are members of SAARC (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka), and also from the Middle East.

It is mandatory for all foreign nationals to register themselves with the local police authorities. The International Office has been specifically set up to streamline this process and help with the paper work of which there is a great deal. .

HEAR DR IDA SCUDDER TELL HER OWN STORY

Dr Dayalan Devanesen pointed me to a youtube entry on which Durai Jasper, from CMC's Public Relations Office, has posted the recorded voice of Dr Ida from a tape she made shortly before her death in 1960.



This presentation includes some interesting historical pictures of Dr Ida's work at Vellore.

I found this easily by entering **Dr Ida Scudder** on Google and scrolling down to "Ida S Scudder's Voice".

This archival recording is a valuable part of the inspiring history of the College and Hospital she founded.

LOGITHA – A STORY OF ONE BORN PROFOUNDLY DEAF

When their second child, Logitha, was 18 months old, Amutha and her husband, Saravanam, himself profoundly deaf, realised she was not responding to sounds. A neighbour recommended CMC's ENT Department as the best place to get help.



The ENT specialist confirmed Logitha's profound deafness and recommended a hearing aid with regular follow-up and speech therapy. Learning that the hearing aid would cost more than 150 Aust dollars, they felt helpless. Sarayanam, limited by his own deafness, worked for daily wages helping in a tea shop. Amutha had two young children to care for. They lived a hand to mouth existence with no money to buy a hearing aid and no way to work harder to pay off a loan for one. The good

news was that an overseas agency had set up a fund at CMC for people like Logitha. Now with hearing aids fitted and regular speech therapy sessions she has been noticeably more alert and responsive.

A child like Logitha would be an ideal candidate for a cochlear implant which would give her a much better chance in life by enabling her to attend normal schools. Whenever money for this becomes available, this hope can be fulfilled.

Rekha is another profoundly deaf girl being helped by CMC's ENT Department.



AN EARLY CHRISTMAS STORY FROM VELLORE

No one wants to be in a hospital on Christmas Day, especially with your first born baby, but that is what happened to Durga, a young woman from a gypsy family whose home is in a small village in the area covered by CMC's Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs (RUHSA).

Durga and her husband had been married for several years before the much longed for baby was conceived. She did all she could to ensure a safe pregnancy and delivery, faithfully attending ante-natal checks at the local government Primary Health Centre. She received the small grant given by the government as an incentive for mothers to attend. She received another small grant when she opted to have the baby in the Health Centre instead of a traditional home birth, an encouragement by the government to reduce the risk of maternal and child mortality.

On 4 November, the baby was safely born but from there on things did not go well. When only two days old he started vomiting. The Primary Health Centre referred him to RUHSA's rural hospital but they felt the problem was beyond them and asked the family to take him to the main hospital in Vellore. He was diagnosed as having an intestinal obstruction and needing urgent surgery. Because he was so small, after the surgery he went to the high dependency nursery in the Neonatal Department.

Just as he seemed well enough to go home, he developed hepatic jaundice. Scans showed that his gall bladder had not formed and he needed a second surgery to perform a highly sophisticated operation by-passing the gall bladder.

So Christmas was spent in the hospital and Durga and her baby were there for some weeks more. As a gypsy girl Durga shunned and was shunned by some of the other mothers in the nursery. This simple village girl reminded some of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was sung and read about so much at Christmas time. She was bright and took a keen interest in her baby's treatment. All the staff in the nursery warmed to her.

Many gypsy communities in India are among the poorest of the poor and her family could in no way afford the treatment this little one needed to survive. From the beginning he was treated without cost to the parents through the Hospital's own free program and the Person to Person Scheme. Funds for needy patients from both the Paediatric Surgery Department and the Department of Neonatology were also drawn on.

The CMC staff and well wishers in other countries who support these programs have given a wonderful Christmas present to a needy little baby.



RECREATIONAL CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY

When four of us visited CMC in February we were taken to RUHSA, CMC's Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs, and there spent some time at the Day Centre with delightful elderly folk, many of whom live alone, as they came for a couple of hours of companionship, exercises and a snack. Since then other Elderly Recreational Centres have been opened in the area covered by RUHSA. The hope is that with community participation more such centres will be established.

I have been sent this story about one of these folk. It reminded me that one of the women we met at RUHSA told of sharing her hut with her goat.

MARIAMMA'S STORY

Mariamamma, is an elderly widow. She lives in Kavasampet and goes to the Day Centre there run by RUHSA. Her home is a dilapidated thatched cattle shed which she shares with her goat, a donation to her from the Day Centre. She does own the land on which the shed stands, legally acquired by her because she squatted on that land for ten years. With her cataracts and joint pains, she cannot work. She survives by begging food from neighbouring houses. She has two sons, both living away and of no help to her. When asked what improvements she would like to see at the Day Centre, she requested provision of a midday meal, not just a mid-morning snack, and help with repairing her "house".



HEALTH INSURANCE FOR POOR PEOPLE

Indian citizens don't have the advantage of a Medicare style Government health cover. Tamil Nadu in July 2009 began a Health Insurance Scheme for the underprivileged with already 14 million people covered. CMC is among the many government and private hospitals that have joined this Government supported Scheme. Since the scheme began over 65,000 people have benefitted from it. It enables many poor people to receive advanced medical treatment at member hospitals, the expenses of the treatment being covered by the Scheme.

MEDICAL WORK STARTS AT THE CHITTOR CAMPUS

I have written in precious Newsletters of the exciting and challenging new project to start a hospital and, hopefully, a training college across the border in Andhra Pradesh, just north of Vellore,

On 16 August the first CMC Vellore activity on the Chittor Campus was a “Roadside Eye Camp” organised by the Ophthalmology Department. As is the custom at the beginning of most significant occasions in India, the Eye Camp began with prayer. Students from the College of Nursing gave a special song and felicitations (great Indian word!) were offered by the District Judge, the Chittor MLA and the District Collector. One of the speakers, Deputy Director Dr Thomas Kuriakose, recalled that Dr Ida Scudder started the first Eye Camp in Vellore in 1906 and now, over a century later, CMC was continuing that tradition at the new campus.

In the Eye Camp 222 patients, who learned of the Camp through handbills and mike announcements, were screened, 91 of these were identified for cataract surgery and 18 were taken to the Eye Department at Vellore for surgery that same day.

TSUNAMI RELIEF WRAP-UP

This year will be the 6th anniversary of the disastrous tsunami which did so much damage to the Indian south-east coast as it raced across the Bay of Bengal on Boxing Day.

At the end of August a valedictory function for the Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Services for some of those affected areas was held in the Scudder Auditorium. This five year project focused on immediate relief, health care and long-term rehabilitation, all at a cost of over half a million Australian dollars. For the project about 6,500 people from 16 villages, most belonging to fishing communities were “adopted”. From these communities over 530 had died in the tsunami leaving 28 widows and 235 orphaned or semi-orphaned children. Emphasis by the CMC workers was not focused on infrastructure as much as on people – rebuilding confidence and guiding them to potential opportunities to help them reconstruct their lives. Weekly mobile clinics and fortnightly medical camps gave medical assistance while issues of health, sanitation and water were managed with the help of the villagers themselves. Orphaned children were enabled to continue their education and were provided social and psychological support, widows were organised into self-help groups and were provided loans and over 200 young people were given technical training in various courses at RUHSA and elsewhere.

At the valedictory function, with over 100 from those villages present, Dr K R John was applauded for his vision and leadership.

THE DVD “HOME OF A HEALING GOD”

Copies are still available from Brian Lee (ph. 3351 3272 or 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.

WEB SITES

www.australianfov.net.au

Vellore and USA sites: www.cmch-vellore.edu & 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 \$1000 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
- 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 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: Dr Bella George, 10 Highgrove Ct, The Gap 4061 (ph 3300 3919)
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