



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,

With no notices about the Indian Dinner or the Annual Meeting in this Newsletter, there is more room for stories and news from CMC Vellore.

A word first about the fund-raising **Street Stalls**. I haven't yet been able to find out when the first Vellore street stall was held in Brisbane, but Dr Felix Arden in a 1968 Newsletter wrote: "The money comes from various sources – and in this last year considerable sums from street stalls and other functions organised by Mrs Hope Rickwood". We all agree that this lady began, worked on and inspired many years of street stall fund raising.

"A Street Stall is to be held at Tank St, McDonnell and East's corner, Thursday, 19 November." (Oct. 1970 Friends of Vellore Committee Minutes)

Now, 42 years later, Street Stalls still happen on a Thursday, once a month in Tank St, just down the street a little from that corner, and once a month, also on a Thursday, at Toowong. Still today it can be recorded that "in this last year considerable sums from street stalls" have helped the Qld Friends to support the great work of CMC Vellore. This month I took some things to the Stall. When I arrived at 6.45 (sunrise was at 6.39) two workers were already setting up and within a few minutes came the first of the customers!

Thanks to the many people who make goods for sale, transport items and tables to and from the stalls and those who work as friendly sales people.

FATIMA – A STORY FROM REHAB

It is claimed that “in India the prevalence of cerebral palsy is high and during delivery one in 50 children are affected. Inadequate medical facilities, especially in rural and remote areas, increase this incidence.” This is Fatima’s story.

Naseera, from a place in Kerala about 150kms from Vellore, was delighted with her first born baby, a daughter whom she could love and who would grow to help her in the home. Sadly it was not long before the young couple realised she was not progressing as she should and it frightened them when she began having seizures. Helpful advice and treatment was given at the nearest government hospital and later she attended a special school for two years. At length the hospital people said they could do no more for her and recommended the Physical Medicine Rehabilitation (PMR) Department at CMC since they were renowned for being able to work miracles for people of all ages with rehabilitation needs. It involved an overnight train journey to Vellore.

At CMC’s Rehabilitation Institute, known by most as Rehab, Fatima was diagnosed with “central motor dysfunction” commonly called cerebral palsy or CP. She could walk only a few steps, always needing support. In her six weeks at Rehab she received intensive physical and occupational therapy and she was trained to walk with forearm crutches without help. Social workers counselled Naseera and Abdul as to how best to help Fatima and drew up a home program for them.

This transforming care involved the dedicated and skilled staff at Rehab and also the help of many other people. The cost of treatment and her six weeks stay came to Rs 33,000. The small plot of land the parents owned had already been heavily mortgaged. A Middle



East benefactor gave Rs 25,000 and local members of their home town Mosque collected money for train fares and medication. A further Rs 4,000 came from an English well-wisher who sells greeting cards, the profits going to the Person-to-Person (PTP) fund, set up to help people like Fatima. Through PTP concerned friends from many countries, including Australia, donate to enable poor people to receive the treatment they urgently need.

A patient at Rehab

Naseera and Abdul returned home with Fatima in no doubt that many people cared deeply for their precious daughter.

PTP donations may be made to the Treasurer of Friends of Vellore.

SURYA – A STORY FROM PAEDIATRIC INTENSIVE CARE

Surya is an example of a typical patient coming in to the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) – very sick and unstable, poor and fighting a potentially treatable condition - but one expensive to treat. About 4 years old His parents brought this 4 year old to CMC saying that he had had a fever for the past week and that for the last 24 hours he had been having difficulty in breathing. It was obvious he was very ill and in shock. He was The diagnosis was septic shock, probably due to Scrub Typhus fever so he was admitted to PICU.

His parents looked like poor peasants. They came from a village about a Rs.10 bus fare away, about 90 KM from Vellore. They live in a hut and own a cow, which is their main source of income. Surya's mother is 26 and his father 36. They have 3 children, an older daughter in 3rd standard who studies away from home and is in a free hostel. Surya is one of twins, his twin being another girl. He is the precious only son; especially so since his mother has been sterilised.

When the cost of the treatment was explained, Suresh's father wanted to take him home, knowing that the charges would be beyond their means. His mother, however, knew that her priceless son would die without the treatment. She was persistent and pleaded with the staff to treat the boy. She promised to pay Rs.15,000 (at today's rates about AU\$300), though no-one could see how she would obtain that much money. The doctors could not turn them away and the little lad was admitted into the PICU. He was intubated and put on a ventilator along with other life support systems. He was very sick for the next 72 hours, and then gradually became stable, and began to improve. All his artificial support could be withdrawn on Day 6. He was transferred to the general paediatric ward and soon allowed to go home. He tells the doctors he wants to be a teacher when he grows up.

The total bill was Rs.30,000. The family paid Rs.6,000 towards the hospital bill and bought medicines for about Rs.10,100. The rest of the cost of his treatment will be met from hospital funds, supplemented by donations from well wishers around the world.



Surya with his Grandmother

TWO DISTINGUISHED CMC VELLORE GRADUATES

It is said of **Drs Raj and Mabelle Arole** that “inspired by God with a special vision” they created the world renowned work of the Comprehensive Rural Health Project, at Jamkhed, Maharashtra. A humble beginning in 1970 in a little known backward, poverty-stricken and drought prone area, population 7000 with no light or tap water, became a centre “filled with a special spirit of Light, Love and Inspiration for many generations” which served the poor effectively and placed health in people’s own hands.

Dr Raj showed an early interest in medicine when he was 14. Several of his friends died in influenza and malaria epidemics and he vowed then that he would become a doctor and serve the poor. His father was a school teacher and his mother too, at a time when few Indian women in rural India had education. Some say that his deep love for social concerns came mainly from his father who often located children who could not afford school fees and taught them for free. Poor and orphaned children often joined them at family meals. Seeing both the plight of many women and violence against women as he was growing up increased his fervour to empower women and give them standing in society.

After working for some years in Mission Hospitals, a Fulbright Scholarship brought them to USA. Raj did his residency in surgery and Mabelle in internal medicine, both gaining an MPH under the late Professor Carl Taylor, their source inspiration in starting the work in Jamkhed.

In this new project he worked wholeheartedly with love, enthusiasm and a deep passion for the poor. He was intelligent, wise and hard working and was driven by a deep commitment and faith in God. His strong prayer life gave him the energy and the ability to withstand many setbacks and challenges without wavering. Mabelle stood by him and they complemented each other with their very different personalities.

His ability as an exceptional speaker enabled him to inspire many to work as he did in community based comprehensive health care for his message was based on a wealth of knowledge and wisdom gained from years of working first hand in the field. He enjoyed teaching and sharing his knowledge with others at all levels – the illiterate as well as those with academic backgrounds.

So effective was his work in rural health that he received the Philippines’ Magasaysay award (considered the Asian Nobel Prize), the Padmabhushan (India’s highest civilian honour) and the Mother Teresa Award for Social Justice. Over 2000 attended his funeral in May, 2011.

(email me at jblee19@bigpond.net.au for a full copy of Dr Arole’s obituary prepared by his daughter, Dr Shobha Arole)

WANT MORE NEWS ABOUT CMC VELLORE?

As well as the official web sites (Aust) www.australianfov.net.au and (Vellore and USA) www.cmch-vellore.edu and www.vellorecmc.org there are hundreds of interesting things on www.cmcvellore.youtube

SNAKE BITES AND OTHER POISONS

Most of Australia's venomous reptiles are content to live in the bush. Many of India's dangerous snakes, such as the cobra, often make their homes in or near inhabited areas, so snake bites are relatively common and are often fatal. In spite of huge growth in Indian cities, most people still live in rural villages and work the land, so poisoning through pesticides (accidental or deliberate) and plant secretions are not rare.

A recent workshop at CMC aimed at formulating a research agenda for the treatment of pesticide and plant poisonings as well as snake bite. So far there is a lack of effective treatments and preventative strategies. The workshop's objectives were to review existing management of poisonings, prioritise research questions needing to be answered and develop plans for collaboration, networking and advocacy in relation to research, policy and training.

From Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India, the 63 participants included clinicians, laboratory scientists, public health specialists, mission hospital doctors, herpetologists, agricultural scientists, farmers, ambulance paramedics and industry representatives.

Recommendations from the workshop envisage a more comprehensive understanding of the problems related to poisonings, ways forward for speedier and more effective treatments and attention given to community based prevention approaches.



One of India's many dangerous snakes

SUTHARSAN - HELPED BY RUHSA

Sutharsan, now 24, is from a small village in a tsunami affected district of Tamil Nadu. His father, a daily wage labourer, and his mother who kept a few cows and goats to supplement their income, managed by careful living and savings to build a cement faced house which survived the tsunami. The animals and most of the contents of the house were swept away. Sutharsan's older brothers and sisters had all settled elsewhere. Sutharsan had failed his final school exams and in those unsettled times his prospects were not good.

CMC was one of the first organisations to arrive on the scene to give relief after the tsunami struck. Social workers from RUHSA visited homes identifying young people who could benefit from vocational training to improve their own and their family's quality of life. The coordinator spoke with Sutharsan's parents, the village leaders and his former school Principal. He satisfied himself that this young man would be a hard worker and recommended that he be offered a place at RUHSA's Community College so he could take a plumbing, electrical and air-conditioning and refrigeration course.

When he completed this six month course he was able to return home qualified to find work using this qualification. He was soon employed in an engineering workshop in his own village where his training and skills are much appreciated by the owner. Through this he is able to give valuable support to his parents as they cope with the tsunami damage.



A scene at RUHSA



Sutharsan's College Certificate

CHITTOOR CHALLENGE MARATHON IN OCTOBER

Some day much of the 120 hectares of the Chittoor Campus will be covered with buildings. Now it is vacant land, well fenced to stop encroachments and well suited for a marathon course. CMC has organised the Chittoor Challenge in which runners can compete in 5km, 10km and half-marathon events. All participants will receive a certificate, a medal and an item of sports gear to encourage them to keep jogging after the event. Sponsorship of Rs 2000 (about 40 Australian dollars just now) allows free registration, and with Rs 5000 there's a free tee shirt also.



An English doctor visiting the Chittoor Campus

All money raised is to be used to subsidise patient care in CMC's Hospitals.

COMPUTERS AT VELLORE

On an average day at the various CMC facilities there are 5800 outpatients, 16000 lab tests, the pharmacy dispenses 17000 items from 4500 prescriptions, nearly 2000 radiological examinations are done with 300 admissions and 300 discharges each weekday. Starting from the appointment, through consultation, investigations, prescriptions, admission and discharge, all are managed by one computerised system, using locally developed and locally maintained applications. CMC runs 6 campuses up to 34kms away and all are networked using optical cables, All data transfer is encrypted. It is clear that any major physical damage or failure to the main servers or its backups would have devastating results for patients particularly.

Through funds provided by a US Government agency an 'IT continuity' or 'disaster recovery' was developed and this has been successfully tested many times.

PERSONAL 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 so a receipt can be sent to you.

STREET STALL NEWS

Many thanks to new volunteers, and to those wonderful people who continue their many years of stall work. In recent months a deal 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).

Again 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

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