



## **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 year it is our privilege to welcome to Brisbane Dr Sunil Chandy, the recently appointed Director of the Christian Medical College and Hospital at Vellore. (See p.2 for more about Dr Chandy)

Before getting to Brisbane Dr Chandy will have been present at the annual meeting of the Australian Board for CMC in Darwin. This meeting will come immediately after a CMC Alumni gathering in Darwin which will be a great opportunity for Northern Territory alumni to re-connect with fellow alumni from other parts of Australia.

### **YOU ARE INVITED**

to a dinner to meet and hear

**Dr Sunil Chandy, Director, Christian Medical College, Vellore.**

**Monday 19 August** at 6.30 for 7pm

**St Mark's Anglican Hall and Church, The Gap**  
1073 Waterworks Rd (cnr. Kullaroo St)

Your contribution \$25 (to pay at the door)

No tickets for this dinner but for catering purposes

**your RSVP no later than Monday 10 August is essential.**

Please contact our Secretary, Gwenda Spencer at 3300 1542

([gwendaspencer@eml.cc](mailto:gwendaspencer@eml.cc)) or Brian Lee at 3351 3272

([jblee19@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jblee19@bigpond.net.au))

## **DINNER TO MEET THE DIRECTOR**

Please feel free to invite your friends also to this great opportunity to hear from the Director up to date news about the Christian Medical College and its Hospitals.

This is not a fund raising event. Your contribution will cover catering expenses.

**DR SUNIL T CHANDY**, Professor in CMC's Department of Cardiology, has been the Director since September 2012. It was in 1984 that he received his MBBS qualification at CMC Vellore and went on to gain an MD in 1990 and a DM Cardiology in 1994, both of these also at CMC Vellore.

Other achievements include a Fellowship in Interventional Cardiology (Royal Adelaide Hospital, South Australia) in 1998, Fellow of the Cardiology Society of India in 2008 and a D Phil (Hospital and Health Systems Management) at the Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani in 2011.

His work has taken him to Bihar and Kerala in India and to the Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Muscat, Oman, where his responsibilities were to initiate and develop a new invasive cardiology program for Muscat.

Alongside his clinical responsibilities at CMC, Dr Chandy has held administrative positions there. In 2003-2007 he was Deputy Medical Superintendent, a position that involved the conceptualisation and design of a new campus facility for the expansion of the current Hospital. Then in 2007, as the Head of Unit III, a cardiology unit which looks after all aspects of critical cardiology with special focus on coronary interventions and heart failure, he helped the move to develop this Unit into a fully fledged subspecialty offering the full range of care including cardiac transplantation.



After his brief time in Brisbane, Dr Chandy will then visit Friends of Vellore groups in other States.

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## **A STORY FROM THE COLLEGE OF NURSING**

Even before the training of doctors began there, nurses were being trained at Vellore. Now hundreds of young men and women from many different backgrounds enter the new buildings of the College of Nursing every day. Grants are available so people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds can apply for entry. Rajeshwari and Kalai Selvi both came from a deprived neighbourhood, Periyannagar, on the outskirts of Vellore. A local Christian charity, the Karunai Illam (Abode of Grace) Trust helps children in this area to complete their schooling. This Trust also encouraged these girls, both from impoverished families, to complete primary school then, because their results were so good, arranged for them to attend a good English-medium high school in Vellore. To the delight of the people in the Trust, who had failed with their candidates often before, they saw these two girls admitted to CMC's College of Nursing. There they were both eligible for scholarships.

**Rajeshwari and Kalai Selvi at work**



In the 3 ½ years of the Diploma nursing course, the first 3 months is classroom based. At this point there is a Lamp Lighting ceremony when the students dedicate themselves to the service of God and their patients. Now as well as the classroom hours they spend time in the wards. In their second year it is more classroom time along with clinical work rotating between medical, surgical and psychiatric wards. In the third year the focus is on community health, midwifery and paediatrics, followed by six months internship preparing to take on responsibility in ward management, educational methods and teaching so they will be equipped to guide junior colleagues.

The girls' families, their community, the Karunai Illam Trust which realised their potential and CMC which saw their commitment to service, all have much to be proud of in these budding young nurses.

## **NATIONAL STUDY ON SNAKE BITES**

Very few in Australia suffer snake bites and rarely the result is death. The situation in India is very different. There are many different venomous snakes, not just the well known and deadly cobra. People working in the fields and forests of rural areas often see snakes and many rural houses can be easily entered by snakes. In the cities often mice and rats abound and their natural predators, the snakes, abound also.

The Toxicology Special Interest Group of CMC's Department of Medicine recently organised a workshop with another Indian agency to develop a national protocol regarding identification and treatment of snake bite. This workshop launched a nation-wide study and survey of snake bites in collaboration with 15 healthcare centres, including mission hospitals.

A recent report by a Canadian agency estimated that there are 50,000 snake bite deaths in India every year. The antivenom used now is often ineffective because it is the only one available for all species of venomous snakes and it costs about AU\$120. The victim has to be treated within an hour of the bite and, even if this is possible, effective treatment depends on the species of the snake.



**A venomous snake in the Hyderabad Zoo**

The workshop underlined the need for further research and the development of a uniform protocol for snake bite treatment in India.

## **TUBERCULOSIS – HIGH RATES STILL IN INDIA**

Few of us here in Australia would know that March 24 is World TB Day remembering that day nearly 130 years ago when Dr Robert Koch identified the bacterium that causes TB. When I was a child living in a small country town several young people of a family across the road from us died of TB. Just out of town were the ruins of a T B Sanatorium, built there because the cool, dry mountain air was thought to help in the recovery of TB patients. For Australia, that is an era long since gone.

It is a very different story in India. CMC's Department of Pulmonary Medicine and the College of Nursing celebrated World TB Day this year with a number of activities. Dr D J Christopher, the Professor and Head of this Department, told those who had gathered that TB along with HIV are the two major deadly infectious diseases in the world. Every year about 10 million worldwide develop TB and India has the dubious distinction of having the largest number of TB cases, accounting for a fifth of all the cases in the world.

It is only with early diagnosis and treatment that the menace of TB can be controlled and even eliminated from India. Certain new tests hold the promise of a quick diagnosis. Genexpert is a table top machine which can process a sputum sample in 2 hours. It will not only provide a diagnosis but can also indicate if there is multi-drug resistance. Two years ago this machine was installed at CMC and it has already led to some dramatic results. Quick commencement of appropriate treatment is likely to result in a rapid cure, less transmission of disease and a reduction in drug resistance.

Since health care workers alone may not be able to fight the scourge of TB, CMC has partnered with Vellore's Rotary Club hoping that an initiative which includes both civil society and the medical fraternity will help to control this deadly disease.

## **CMC'S DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Since it began in 2004 CMC's Distance Education Unit's courses have benefitted more than 2000 doctors from across India in both the private and the public sectors.

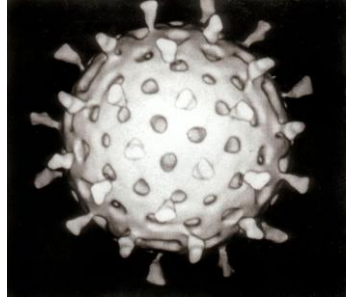
High quality self-learning modules, regular assignment submissions, intensive resident contact programs, sessions focussing on ethics and values and project work form the curriculum of all the distance education courses.

These have become a platform for change as the special focus on ethics, rational prescribing, consultation skills and application of Family Medicine principles, the practical demonstration of compassionate, cost-effective and high quality care along with attitude change has resulted in transformation in three major aspects – Professional, Ethical and Patient Care.

## RESEARCH – A VITAL PART OF CMC'S LIFE

Alongside teaching in its Colleges and healing in its Hospitals there have always been opportunities for research at CMC. Today new technologies lead to new discoveries and the wonderful world of I T enables cooperative work with other institutions in many new ways.

In May this year the Government of India Department of Biotechnology announced the results from a trial of a Rotavirus vaccine developed and manufactured in India. "This is the virus which causes gastroenteritis especially in children and is regarded as the most common cause of severe diarrhoea among infants and young children. Worldwide more than 450,000 children under 5 die every year from this infection" (an estimated 100,000



in India), "and about 2 million more become severely ill. The incidence and severity of infections has declined significantly in countries that have added rotavirus vaccine to their routine childhood immunisation policies." (quoted from Wikipedia)

The Indian vaccine was developed from a weakened strain of rotavirus isolated from an Indian child at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi in 1985-86. Since then scientists in India and USA have worked to develop an Indian vaccine. A number of Indian hospitals including CMC Vellore were chosen to conduct clinical trials.

The trial at CMC involved recruiting 1500 children and following them up for two years with a team of 60 people working on the study. The new vaccine is shown to be safe and efficient, preventing the disease in 56% of the children treated. The good news is that it can be provided for 54 rupees compared with the rotavirus already on the market which costs 900 rupees.

### TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS BY BANK TRANSFER

People wishing to donate to CMC Vellore may find it convenient to pay by Bank transfer.

**Full Name of Account:** Friends of Vellore Christian Medical College & Hospital Queensland Group Support Fund. (You can enter just: Friends of Vellore 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: [cmcvellore@optusnet.com.au](mailto:cmcvellore@optusnet.com.au) so a receipt can be sent to you.

## NEELAKANDRAN – A STORY FROM THE EYE HOSPITAL



Neelakandran and his wife are a childless couple from Thiruvanamalai about 80kms from Vellore. Although he is 65 he has to continue working as a manual labourer and earns about Rs 2000 per month. Since his wife is not able to find work it was a great worry for them when he began to lose sight in his right eye. It was very important that he should preserve his eyesight but what could they do when they had little money for doctors' bills?

But the fame of Vellore's Christian Medical College has spread far and wide, well beyond this town. They had heard that it was a place where, if possible, no one with a treatable condition is turned away even if they can't afford the fees. They decided to make the long bus journey to Vellore.

Here they were directed to the Eye Department of the Schell Hospital, which was built on the site of the original 1904 Hospital set up by Dr Ida Scudder, the founder of CMC.

The doctor told Neelakandran he had a cataract in his right eye which could be removed and a new lens implanted. He was told he could be admitted and have the surgery done the next day and return home after a second night in the Hospital.

The full cost for this came to about Rs 10,000. In spite of his poverty he had managed to borrow Rs 1,500 towards his bill. Funds provided to the Person to Person scheme by people in various countries, including Australia, contributed Rs 4,000 and the remaining amount was absorbed by CMC.

Neelakandran, with restored sight, knows that his faith in CMC and all who support the life giving work done there has been vindicated.

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Please email [fovqld@hotmail.com](mailto:fovqld@hotmail.com)

Please leave your surname and current address so our mailing lists can be adjusted for the next Newsletter

## **A WELL DESERVED AWARD**

In this year's Queen's Birthday Honours an Order of Australia Medal was awarded to Mrs Gwenda Spencer who for a number of years has been the Secretary of Queensland Friends of Vellore.

Gwenda has been a tireless worker in many service activities not the least being the selfless giving of her time and energy to help refugees, seeking out accommodation for them, channeling gifts of furniture and other necessities to them and just generally being a friend to so many.

Gwenda's efficiency and dependability as our Secretary is just one of the many gifts she has given to good causes.

## **A REMINDER OF THE WEB SITES**

Australian Board site: [australianfov.net.au](http://australianfov.net.au)

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

Regards, Brian Lee (Newsletter Editor).

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

Chairman: Mrs Cathy Chandani, 24 Mathews St, Bethania 4205 (ph 0412391353)

Vice Chairman: Rev John Hooper, 74 Meynell St, Salisbury 4107 (ph 3701 0017)

Hon. Secretary: Mrs Gwenda Spencer, 22 Elgata St, The Gap 4061 (ph 3300 1542)

Hon. Treasurer: Mr Richard Caitens, 107 Northgate Rd Northgate 4013 (ph 3266 1962)

Stalls Co-ordinator: Mrs Claire Mainstone, 37 Fifth Av, St Lucia, 4067 (ph 3371 1332)

Publicity Officer &

Newsletter Editor: Rev Brian Lee, 19 Glenclay Street, Ferny Grove 4055 (ph 3351 3272)