

Friends of Vellore, Victoria

A division of the Australian Board of Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital Limited, ABN 18 110 916 375

JUNE 2015 NEWSLETTER

ANNUAL DINNER

Saturday 22 August 2015 6pm – 10pm

at the Junior Common Room, Queen's College, University of Melbourne,
1 – 17 College Crescent Parkville 3052 Victoria

GUEST SPEAKER

**Dr. Nitin Verma. AM FRANZCO, MMed, MD., Dip
NBE, Arzt fur Augenheilkunde**

**He has been one of Hobart Eye Surgeons for 12
years. He is actively engaged in the treatment
and control of Macular Degeneration (M.D.), and
heads a number of research projects concerning
new drugs and treatments for M.D. as well as
Diabetic Macular Oedema. He was awarded the
Meritorious Service Award for Prevention of
Blindness (Asia Pacific Academy of
Ophthalmology) in 2009.**



He is Associate Professor in the UTAS School of Medicine, Head of Ophthalmology at the Royal Hobart Hospital and Senior Lecturer, Ophthalmology, in the University of Sydney.

He leads the East Timor Eye Project, coordinating philanthropic, eye-care work in East Timor, by doctors, optometrists and nurses from almost all states of Australia. For his work, he was awarded the Order of Timor Leste in 2010, and was appointed Honorary Consul to East Timor, in 2006.

He was awarded Hobart's Citizen of the Year, 2013 and was a finalist in 2013 for Tasmania's Australian of the Year, 2013.

TOPIC: "Education in the 21st century, the global classroom"

Dr Sunil Chandy, Director of CMC Vellore, will be present.

Formal invitation to follow, but keep the date free.

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The **Australian Board of Friends of Vellore** will be meeting in Melbourne earlier on that day (August 22nd).

The Annual General Body meeting of the Board is held at different capital cities of the states in rotation. Delegates from the various state groups of Friend of Vellore and Alumni attend the meeting to discuss the activities of the board. The executive is elected from among the delegates. The last AGM was at Adelaide on 23rd August 2014. All donations to the work done at Vellore which are collected by the various FOV groups are channelled through the treasurer of the Board. The donations to the 'Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital Support fund' are Tax deductible and sent to Vellore for various activities, but the majority of this money is deposited into the Endowment Fund, which contributes to medical care for the very poor. (see www.australianfov.net.au)

The Executive Committee (2014 – 2015) of the Australian Board

President: Dr. Bella George

Vice President: Dr. Stephen Aseervatham

Secretary: Ms. Liz Guiver

Treasurer: Mr Richard Caitens

FOVV will be represented at the Australian Board meeting by Dr David Price (as a voting member) and Rev John Connan (as an observer).

It is expected that other states will be represented, and there will be opportunity to meet the Australian Board members at the dinner that evening.

Friends of Vellore Victoria Committee has seen a number of changes since the last Annual meeting in October 2014.

Mrs Liz Guiver resigned as President of FOVV Committee. We thank her for her work for FOVV.

Mr George Guiver also resigned as the newsletter editor after producing the October newsletter. Thank you to him for editing the FOVV newsletters over the last few years.

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Last year Guidelines for the Victorian FOV were drawn up and the committee is currently reassessing its role given the new members of the committee with a different set of skills and experience.

Our new president is **Professor David Runia** - Master of Queen's College at the University of Melbourne.

Dr Runia was born in The Netherlands and came to Australia at the age of four years when his father came to teach theology at the Reformed Theological College at Geelong. David studied Classics at Melbourne University, living at Queen's College during some of this time. He returned to The Netherlands gaining a doctorate in Ancient Philosophy in Amsterdam in 1983. He continued research in Princeton, USA, and ANU Canberra, then taught in the Netherlands before being appointed Master of Queen's College and returning to Melbourne in 2002.

David's chief research interests have been in the history of ideas and particularly the relation between Greek philosophy and the Judaeo-Christian tradition. He is a world authority on the figure of Philo of Alexandria, the learned Greek-speaking Jew who lived at the same time as Jesus Christ. He is also currently doing research on the sources for the history of early Greek philosophy. As a result of many years of research and teaching experience David is convinced that ancient ideas, especially in the areas of ethics and spirituality, are highly relevant to our lives and culture as we experience them in the 21st century.

(Wikipedia and www.queens.unimelb.edu.au)

Prof. David Runia gave a talk at CMC Vellore in April 2014, and a future edition of the newsletter will have a summary of his talk, which gives some information about his research interests.

There has been a long history of involvement of Queen's College with Vellore Christian Medical College – with Dr Edward Gault having attended Queen's, and many former students and staff supporting CMC.

We also have a new **Secretary – Dr Helen Mc Namara** – and a “Thank You” is due to Mrs Louise Joy who filled that role previously.

Mrs Heidi Winnen is our new **Treasurer**.

Dr David Price, Patron of FOVV, sent the following report.

I was able to take a trip to Vellore in early April as Patron of our worthy Group.

It gave me a chance again to be absorbed in the unique life of the wonderful Christian Medical College & Hospital we are so proud to support.

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We have very good reason to be. It is still sustaining an open, inexpensive Centre of Excellence for over 7000 in-patients per day & 2700 beds. It is served by 600 doctors of every speciality imaginable, but it is still connected with nearby rural India, with daily Rural roadside Clinics.

The main road outside the Christian Medical Hospital, Vellore



I stayed in the amazing “Big Bungalow”, (*see photo below – Ed.*), where Dr Ida lived for a while. It rained a lot between quite humid spells.



Dr Sunil Chandy was overseas for a week, but Hugh Skeil had arranged for me to be taken to the new 640 acre Hospital Campus at Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh, 1 hour north of Vellore.

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Chittoor is developing fast & the Out patients Clinic has functioned for a year. The new Operating wing, Doctors quarters, Ward Blocks & Chapel are to be opened in July. In area it is nearly 20 times bigger than the current Vellore Campus.

David Price at the Chittoor site



God's work is on the move, & our recent gift of \$10,000 taken there by Dr Colin Honey for a new Bio Ethics Department was greatly appreciated as were the recent visits from 2 of our Melbourne Social Work Department young ladies.

The label on one of the hospital laundry baskets summed up the busy Hospital life:

“Rejoice in the Lord always”

CMC Vellore have been running Distance Education courses for doctors for 8-9 years.

The course is for two years and in that time the doctors doing the course have workbooks with assignments to complete and send to Vellore. During the two year course, there are 3 contact programs of two weeks, held in a number of different centres around India, with a requirement of 90% attendance before they are able to sit for the final examinations. The aim of the course is to teach the Family Doctors to practice Whole Person medicine – i.e. to think of the mental, spiritual and social effects of the physical conditions presenting to them as well as providing the best possible medical care for the physical illnesses, and to practice ethically. The motto

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of the course is “ Resolve More, Refer Less” - a help especially for those patients who cannot afford specialist fees.

In the last couple of years, CMC has made an arrangement with a Medical University in Chennai for the course to be part of their Master of Medicine course, so those who pass the examinations will have a university qualification.

While I was in Chennai last February the group of doctors attending that contact program were invited to go to a Family Medicine workshop where a formal agreement was signed between CMC and the University of Edinburgh, which is involved in International education programs. Dr Vinod Shah (current President of International Christian Medical and Dental Fellowship) who had conceived of the idea of Distance Education in India, told how he had realised that the current rate of training doctors in India was never going to catch up with the need for more doctors, and allowing doctors to keep working in their practices, but also to keep studying as a life long habit would be helpful.

At the beginning of the first contact program for each group there is a session highlighting the great need in India – and also in Africa and China. These countries have the largest populations per land mass, and the largest growth in population. They also have the largest maternal and infant mortality rates, often of preventable diseases. India has the most poverty of all countries, and the largest number of girls not in secondary school. Educating the population about health matters is important and the doctors are encouraged to train their staff and to use their waiting rooms to educate the patients, especially about vaccinations and prevention and management of gastroenteritis and about seeking medical help early in an illness.

A number of doctors from UK and Australia assist with facilitating the contact programs, and last February I had assistance from 6 local doctors who have done the course earlier – 3 each day. They will be able to run the courses without overseas assistance soon.

The contact programs are held in a number of hospitals around the country - in Vellore, Kolenchery, Bangalore, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Oddanchatran, Tezpur, Chennai, Padhar, Herbertpur, and Raxaul last February.

There is a video link up for a session each day so there is opportunity to ask questions of the specialists presenting on the day. CMC have produced excellent Powerpoint and DVD presentations for the program and there is time to practise practical clinical skills.

A popular session was a quiz each morning with a picture of a skin condition, an ECG, a Chest X-ray, a medication, or a pathology test, and the students wrote down what they thought each were, and the treatment, or indications / contraindications and possible side effects for using the medication or ordering the pathology test and the expected results. There was feedback from various students who had some expertise in various areas – e.g. one of the students was teaching dermatology, so gave us a short tutorial about many of the skin conditions shown, and a couple of others were better than most with reading ECGs.

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There was homework to do each night, and the work was marked the next day, and counted towards their end results. There was a practical test at the end of the first contact program – similar to the exam they will do later in the year. The next contact program is in October, and the third in June next year, then final exams in August. Those who miss some time in the contact programs are expected to make up the time in the following course.

At many of the hospitals where the contact programs are held there is opportunity for the doctors doing the course to go to the wards or outpatients and have some input from the specialists at those hospitals. It is valuable for those who practise in that area to meet the specialists to whom they may be referring their patients at times, and also to find out about the facilities and expertise available locally.

At the end of the contact program at which I was an observer (before being invited to facilitate a course), the doctors involved set up a closed Facebook page where they can post clinical cases and discuss how they would manage them. It is also a way of them keeping in contact socially.

I studied Medicine with a view to becoming a “Missionary Doctor”, and had some interest in India, but did not feel a specific call. I married and had children and settled into suburban general practice in Melbourne.

In recent years, since my family responsibilities had reduced, I attended a couple of weekend training courses run by an organisation called PRIME (Partnerships in International Medical Education). This is a Christian organisation which began in the UK after the Second World War. They organised a number of doctors to assist doctors in Europe who needed help in recovering from the devastation caused by the war. In later years doctors in Australia became involved – some going to Eastern European countries to run short courses, similar to CMC courses, for doctors and nurses and paramedical people. But most of the Australian doctors now involved are going to Papua New Guinea and India, and soon to China.

Soon after I returned from India after my first visit, I read the chapter in Genesis about Abraham setting out from Haran at the age of 75 - for a new life in Israel. It is good to have the assurance that God is leading in the changes in our lives, and we can be useful for Him even as we age, and the experiences we have had in our lives can be used to help others. Around that time I came across a quote from Betty Friedan “ Ageing is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength” I certainly feel that God has given me the strength and the opportunity to do this work for him at a stage in life when many of my contemporaries have retired.

Nancy Nicholas

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JUNE 2015 NEWSLETTER

FOVV EXECUTIVE 2014 -2015

Patron: Mr. David Price OAM

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Founder and Chair Australian Palliative Link International:

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Send donations for work in Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital to:

FOVV Treasurer
PO Box 81
Armadale North VIC 3143

Or online at: <http://australianfov.net.au/how-to-donate/>
(at the bottom of the web page there is an online donation option)