

Friends of Vellore, Victoria

A division of Australian Board of Vellore Christian Medical College & Hospital Support Fund ABN 65 125 097 974



June 2019 NEWSLETTER

From the President's pen

Dear Friends,

Once again we are sending out a short newsletter telling you about our activities in support of the Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore. Please take just a few minutes of your time to read our news.

The highlight is the announcement of our annual Fundraising Dinner which will be held this year at Queen's College on 24 August from 6:00PM – 10:00 PM. I sincerely hope that you will be able to attend. We also report on an inspirational meeting with the Principal of the CMC, Prof Anna Pulimood, who recently visited Melbourne. Anna graciously gave me a guided tour of the Edward Gault Museum of Pathology during my visit to Vellore in April 2014. It was very good to catch up with her again. Finally, may I draw your attention to our news of the Annual Giving campaign, which offers you four very worthwhile causes which you can support. Each of them helps the CMCH give life-changing assistance to the extremely disadvantaged.

I wish you happy reading and look forward to seeing you at the dinner.

David Runia

You are warmly invited to the FOVV Fundraising Dinner

Please join us for a wonderful evening supporting and celebrating the work done in Christ's name at the CMCH in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India: **Saturday August 24th, 2019, 6 – 10pm**

We are pleased to announce that our guest speaker is the eminent paediatrician Dr Chellam Kirubakaran. She will be speaking on: "Paediatrics at CMC: past, present and future". We will be joined this year by members of the Australian Vellore Board. The President of the AVB, Dr Stephen Aseervatham will also make a brief presentation.

Venue – Queen's College, Junior Common Room, 1–17 College Crescent, Parkville 3052.

Dinner Fare – Two elegant courses and beverages

Pricing - \$125 per head (includes receipted tax-deductible donation of \$50), Students \$75.

For **inquiries** and to **RSVP** please e-mail the secretary at FOVVsecretary@gmail.com.

We would appreciate early RSVPs and payments. Please RSVP before **August 2**.

Cheque payments can be sent to the Secretary FOVV, c/- 3 Fallon St Brunswick 3056. **EFT payments** can be made to the FOVV Bendigo Bank: BSB 633000 ACC 139185151.



Dr Chellam Kirubakaran FOVV
2019 Dinner guest speaker

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Dr Chellam Kirubakaran

Our guest speaker for this year's annual dinner is the distinguished paediatrician Dr Chellam Kirubakaran. She is the Publicity Officer of the Australian Vellore Board. After graduating at Thanjavur Medical College, she joined the CMC in 1971. On completing her post graduate degree there, she stayed on as a member of the faculty for 35 years. She was the Professor and Head of the Department of Child Health and Neonatology. Her husband Dr Meshach Kirubakaran is an alumnus of CMC and was the Professor and Head of the Department of Neurology at the College. Since coming to live in Australia, they have both been working in Mildura. They have continued their association with CMC and been active in organising reunions of CMC alumni in Australia.

A visit from Dr Anna Pulimood

Prof Anna Pulimood, the Principal of the Christian Medical College, visited Melbourne in early June as the guest of the University of Melbourne Department of Medicine. Members of the committee had the pleasure of meeting her at a lunch in Carlton, during which she updated us on the many positive developments at the College and also on the increasing collaboration with the University of Melbourne in research and other programs.

Anna commenced her medical studies at the College in 1982, the same "batch" as the current Director, Dr J V Peter. Older friends of Vellore may recall her father, Dr Benjamin Pulimood, a distinguished gastroenterologist. He was Director of the CMCH from 1987 to 1994.



News from CMC Vellore

In April 2019 Professor Gagandeep Kang made history as the first woman Indian scientist to be elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in the 359 year history of Britain's prestigious scientific academy. She is Professor in the Department of Gastrointestinal Sciences at CMC and has won acclaim for her ground-breaking research in developing vaccines against typhoid and rotavirus and for her interdisciplinary research of infections in children. She has worked on diarrhoea diseases and public health issues in India since the early 1990's. Professor Kang played a vital role in the research that culminated in the development of Rotavac, a vaccine that targets diarrhoea.



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Vision 2020 – Friends of Vellore groups chip in

The mission of the VISION 2020 Global Initiative is to eliminate the main causes of all preventable and treatable blindness as a public health issue by the year 2020. It provides guidance, technical and resource support to countries that have formally adopted its agenda. World Sight Day is the second Thursday in October.

It is thus very fitting that the Friends of Vellore have decided to provide funds to purchase a mobile unit for the Ophthalmology Department at CMC. It will enable staff to travel to each of the CMC campuses to provide more specialised treatment and monitoring of diabetic retinopathy, a major cause of vision impairment in India. It will save the patients from needing to travel to the Ophthalmology Department in Vellore. The cost is \$160,000 and cannot be met by the Department's present budget. The FOV groups in the UK, USA and Australia have decided to make this a shared project over the next three years. The unit has been ordered and will be in action soon.

Here in Australia anyone can have their eyes and sight checked by an optician, or a general medical practitioner, and be referred to an eye specialist (Ophthalmologist) if necessary. Vision is most commonly checked by an Optician or Optometrist and spectacles prescribed if necessary.

Spectacles are needed to correct refractive errors, and many people in poor areas have not discovered how much better their sight could be with appropriate spectacles.

Cataract operations, where the opaque lens in the eye is replaced by an artificial lens, are common for older people but can be needed in children too.

Glaucoma is an increase in pressure in the eye, which can damage the optic nerve carrying the visual images to the brain. Some types of glaucoma are inherited. Treatment is by regular use of eye drops or sometimes by operation to reduce the cause of pressure build up.

Diabetic retinopathy commonly occurs when a person has had diabetes for 20 years or more, and is more likely if the diabetes has not been well controlled. The small blood vessels throughout the body are damaged by the raised level of glucose in the blood stream and this can be seen by looking at the blood vessels at the back of the eye. Changes that can be seen could be microaneurysms (tiny bulges of the blood vessels which may burst and cause haemorrhages), small haemorrhages, exudates (patches of fluid in the tissues causing swellings to appear in the retina), new blood vessels, ischaemic changes (where there is not sufficient blood flow to keep the tissues healthy). Some of these changes can be treated with laser therapy, and some can need injections into the eye. Good control of the blood sugar level is important in preventing and treating these conditions.

Trachoma is a chronic conjunctivitis which can cause blindness, especially when eyelashes turn inward and abrade the cornea. It is common in poverty stricken parts of the world including India and parts of Australia. It is highly infectious and more common in small children who tend to rub their eyes, and perhaps have flies around their faces. It is treated by antibiotics. Teaching hygiene, especially face washing, is a very effective preventative measure.

There are a number of other eye conditions for which specialised equipment is necessary to make a diagnosis and monitor management. Accidents and burns can also cause eye problems needing treatment by specialists.

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Like many other missions, the CMCH organises **Eye Camps**, during which ophthalmology staff go out into the field for a set number of days. People who come to these camps are assessed and treatment is organised. The operation most commonly needed is for cataracts, but other conditions are also treated. Lack of equipment has so far prevented the diagnosis of diabetic retinopathy, but this will be remedied by the provision of the mobile diagnostic unit donated by the Friends Of Vellore.

FOVV is including the treatment of eye conditions as one of the projects that it is supporting in its annual giving program this year. See the next item.

The Annual Giving Program

Last year FOVV launched a successful Annual Giving Program which raised more than \$10,000 for three projects supporting the disadvantaged and extremely poor in the areas of health and education. This year we will continue this campaign with the following three projects:

- (1) Development Department Emergency Fund.
- (2) Supporting eye surgery in response to the VISION 2020 Global Initiative.
- (3) Allied Health Scholarships Endowment Fund.

It is also possible to support the General Support Fund of the Australian Vellore Board.

We enthusiastically recommend this campaign to all our members and supporters.

From the archives



CMC's centenary commemorated with a stamp.

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If you would like to make a donation to support the good work done at the Christian Medical College and Hospital, Vellore:

Post Cheque or money order to: Treasurer Friends of Vellore, Victoria 3 Fallon Street BRUNSWICK VIC 3056	Direct transfer or deposit to: Friends of Vellore Victoria Bendigo Bank BSB: 633000 Account: 139185151 Please email details of any deposits to FOVVTreasurer@gmail.com
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For the Annual Giving Campaign, please select the program/s you wish to fund:

- Development Department Emergency Fund
- Supporting eye surgery for the extremely disadvantaged
- Endowment Fund for Allied Health Scholarships
- General support fund Australian Vellore Board

For further information, please contact the Secretary

If you are interested in leaving a bequest to the CMCH via the Australian Vellore Board, please get in touch with the Secretary/Treasurer.

FOVV COMMITTEE 2018–2019

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