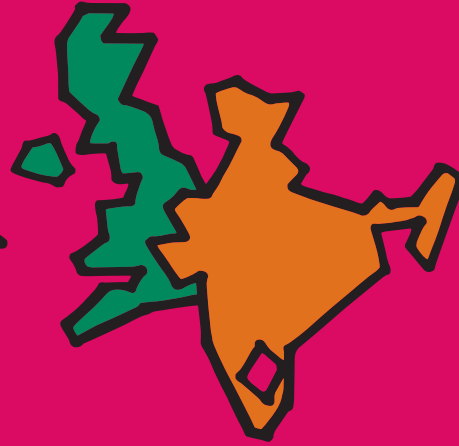


# Friends of Vellore<sup>UK</sup>



Registered with



FUNDRAISING  
REGULATOR

Supporting Christian Medical College, Vellore, South India

## The best gift this Christmas



Each year, Friends of Vellore UK gives £40,000 in support of the Person-to-Person (PTP) programme at Christian Medical College Vellore (CMC). The fund enables donors to pay for the cost of an individual patient's treatment.

For every £1 you give to PTP, CMC gives £4. It is a very cost-effective and personal way of supporting someone who might not otherwise be able to afford essential medical treatment. Each month, CMC Vellore sends a report to all the donors with a patient story and a summary of those who benefitted. Below is Nila's story:

Nila\* is an 18-year-old girl from Vellore. Since birth, she has suffered from various health problems. As a baby, she had muscle weakness, seizures and was slow to achieve developmental milestones. Her family took her to CMC's Low-Cost Effective Care Unit (LCECU) for medical care whenever she fell ill.

Nila started going to school; her muscles were too weak to carry her books, but her siblings helped her. After completing Grade 10 (UK school Year 9), she was severely affected by pneumonia and had to drop out of school. LCECU referred her to CMC's Main Hospital where she was admitted under the Department of General Medicine. Following a day in the medical intensive care unit, her condition improved. She was moved to the ward and gradually weaned off non-invasive ventilation. The social workers decided to surprise her with a cake to celebrate her birthday! She beams with joy at this special kindness and shares the cake with everyone in the ward.

The cost of Nila's treatment was



*Nila beams with happiness after being surprised with a birthday cake*

subsidised by CMC thanks to generous contributions from our supporters to the Person-to-Person fund. Nila and her family are so grateful for the thoughtfulness of those who donated.

CMC's dream is to never have to turn away anyone in need. Concessions and free treatment are made available according to need, amounting to around 15% of CMC's budget. CMC operates several charity

schemes including the Person-to-Person fund and the Emergency fund, as well as providing low-cost accommodation and free meal schemes. But these schemes always need more funds if CMC is to continue to be able to help all those that need it. You might like to consider a donation to PTP as an alternative Christmas gift this year (see page 2 for further details).

*\*Name changed and details shared with consent*

# Dear Friends of CMC Vellore,



We are so grateful to each one of you for your faithful support in prayer and giving towards our projects at Christian Medical College Vellore and its associated mission hospitals.

In this latest issue of our newsletter, we launch our Christmas appeal for a new palliative care service (see the enclosed leaflet) and give an update on last year's appeal for the Jawadhi Hills Community Health Workers (page 4). We bring you

updates from several of our projects including some of our recently funded initiatives at smaller mission hospitals (page 9). The patient stories and reports on education and training programmes demonstrate the amazing impact your donations are making.

We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and are inspired by the wonderful work going on.

*Ruth Tuckwell*

**Ruth Tuckwell**

Charity Manager, Friends of Vellore UK

## Annual Supporters' Meeting

Our annual meeting for all supporters of Friends of Vellore UK took place this October. We were delighted to see so many supporters of the charity there and very much enjoyed the time we had with those of you who were able to come along.

We heard from Abraham George about what inspired him to start running marathons to raise money for Friends of Vellore UK, and how he fits in his training around his busy schedule as a GP - he runs to and from work as often as he can! I think we were all in awe of his dedication.

Ruth spoke about our support for smaller mission hospitals across India and gave an insight into the work of the 168 hospitals that make up CMC's Mission Network.

The supporters meeting runs alongside the CMC alumni reunion where Friends of Vellore UK Chairman and CMC Alumnus, Dayalan, spoke about the Person-to-Person scheme. Following his inspiring words, we raised £500 by holding a raffle with all the proceeds going to the Person-to-Person scheme.

We sold some beautiful cards, bags and other textiles made by a group of ladies at the

Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs in Vellore. The cards were such a hit that we will be increasing our order for next year!

The weekend and the supporters' meeting felt like a great success, and we are already looking forward to doing it all again next year.

Thank you to all who joined us. We hope to see many of you again in 2024.

*Next year's Annual Supporters' Meeting will be held on Sunday 6 October 2024 at the DoubleTree by Hilton hotel, Coventry. Please put the date in your diaries.*



Ruth and Georgina with the charity display



## Give an alternative Christmas gift

If you would like to give someone an alternative gift this Christmas, we have just the thing!

The Person-to-Person scheme funds treatment for patients unable to pay their medical bills. It is organised and implemented within CMC Vellore. Medical or nursing staff or social workers identify patients in their clinical department who cannot afford to pay their bills and who could be helped by the scheme. CMC bears the cost of administering the programme, so every penny given goes directly to help poor patients.

You can help needy patients by buying one

of our Person-to-Person gift cards. Chose an amount to donate, and we will send you a card to say that as a Christmas present this year a donation has been made to the Person-to-Person scheme at Christian Medical College Vellore. The card comes with an envelope and will be posted directly to you so that you can personalise it as you wish.

Please do visit our website to find out more: <https://friendsofvellore.org/shop/alternative-christmas-gifts/>



PTP Christmas Gift Card

# CMC News

CMC Vellore continues to be a centre of excellence in healthcare, education, research and outreach, serving thousands of patients with compassionate, competent healthcare. The Indian Government's Ministry of Education has ranked CMC Vellore 3rd among 176 medical institutions in the country. CMC Vellore proudly retains this rank for the 6th consecutive year. Among private medical colleges, they continue to top the list.

CMC's commitment to the healing ministry includes provision for the vulnerable and marginalised through its various charitable schemes. Last year, CMC provided subsidised treatment for needy patients amounting to around ₹300 Crores (£30 million). In addition to this, CMC facilitates a government health insurance scheme whereby the Tamil Nadu

were admitted in the wards. While more than half of CMC's inpatients come from Tamil Nadu and south Indian states, they also serve many families from the east and northeastern states. Travelling far from home when you or your loved one is sick can be tremendously challenging. To make the process a little easier, the Kolkata - Mar Thoma Syrian Church

teaching hospital here.

The northeastern Indian state of Manipur has been in crisis following an eruption of ethnic-religious violence in May. People from Meitei and Kuki communities are warring against each other resulting in loss of life, destruction of churches and many having to flee their homes. Open Doors writes that



CMC Vellore Main Hospital



Patients waiting outside CMC



Unveiling the foundation stone at Chittoor campus

government pays for the medical bills of all accident victims for treatment within 48 hours of the accident. This is particularly relevant for CMC's new hospital at Ranipet, situated on a major highway with a trauma centre which treats many victims of road traffic accidents.

Last year, over 3.1 million patients visited CMC as outpatients and over 143,000 patients

recently launched a helpdesk service in Kolkata which facilitates making outpatient appointments at CMC.

A taskforce is working on plans for a new medical college at the CMC Vellore Chittoor campus which will increase the number of places for medical students. On 4th July, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh unveiled the foundation stone for a new 300-bed

'Christians on both sides have been disproportionately targeted.' Thousands of displaced people are living in relief camps. CMC sent medical and general supplies to the relief work in Manipur and is in touch with local mission hospitals in its network. Please pray for an end to the violence and for protection for Christians. Pray that God would comfort and strengthen Christians in their faith.



Promoting health and welfare of the poor and marginalised

## Vision

Friends of Vellore UK supports projects at Christian Medical College Vellore, and other mission hospitals working in partnership with CMC. The charity seeks to follow Christ's example in showing compassion towards those who are vulnerable and marginalised. We want to ensure that everyone can receive appropriate healthcare regardless of their ability to pay or their faith.

## Mission

We strive to fulfil our vision through the following activities:

- Raising funds to support healthcare, education and development projects at CMC that benefit the poorest and most excluded patients and communities
- Encouraging CMC in its partnership with smaller mission hospitals across India
- Promoting the work of CMC and sharing news and information for prayer.



A home visit in the Jawadhi Hills

# Holistic care for palliative patients

Abraham George (an Alumnus of CMC Vellore) is a GP in the UK. He ran the London Marathon this year to raise funds for CMC's palliative home care team. Wonderfully, he managed to raise £5000! During a reunion visit to Vellore this August he was able to accompany the team on a home visit to meet Mrs Kalai.

Mrs Kalai is a cheerful young lady (aged 34) with a supportive husband and two young children (4 and 6 years). She has metastatic Ewings Sarcoma of the hip for which she has been treated. However, the treatment has not been able to cure the disease. She is cared for by CMC's palliative care team. She was previously in a lot of pain but now has good pain relief and is cheerful.

The palliative care team visit Mrs Kalai regularly in her home. She receives medicines for symptom management on a subsidised rate. The team have provided her with a mattress, a back rest and incontinence pads for use free of cost. The family also receives free food packages worth Rs 1000 (£10) every month.

At a recent home visit the team identified some particular needs:



Visiting Mrs Kalai in her home

- The toilet is behind the house, and she needs to be carried there. Being an Indian type of toilet, it is very difficult for her to use with disease in the hip. Though initially reluctant, she has agreed to use a commode which CMC have supplied.

- Mrs Kalai spends a lot of time listening to music and Christian messages on her phone - hence the team have now given her a Bluetooth speaker to make this experience better.
- She is mostly in bed. The team have provided a wheelchair to enable her to get some fresh air in the area behind the house facing the field.

Mrs Kalai is extremely grateful for the practical help. Please pray for her, that she is especially aware of the compassionate care of her heavenly Father and her eternal hope as she listens to Christian music and messages on her new speaker.

This is a great example of the holistic care provided by the palliative care team and which Friends of Vellore UK are privileged to partner alongside.



## Community Health Workers appeal update

You may remember that at Christmas time last year, we asked supporters of Friends of Vellore UK to consider helping us to sponsor community health workers.

Friends of Vellore UK sponsor 11 community health workers in the Jawadhi Hills. These workers bridge the gap between the local tribal community in the Jawadhi Hills and the CMC medical team. They are integral to improving healthcare in the isolated and entrenched communities that make up the Jawadhi Hills.

Community health workers encourage patients to attend the mobile clinic, accompany the nurse during home visits, and perform independent home visits to identify and refer patients with health problems. They



Some of the Community Health Workers

follow up antenatal and postnatal women, under-fives, and chronic patients. They also provide health education in homes and local schools on water, sanitation, hygiene and

nutrition, and motivate mothers to immunise their children. They do so much!

Thank you to all who donated to this appeal. With your help we raised £5840 and almost covered the cost of six workers this year. Your donations have helped to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in the Jawadhi Hills and we are so very grateful for your support.

This project is ongoing, so please donate if you are able to and look out for our 2023 Christmas fundraiser on Palliative Care. There should be a copy in your newsletter!

Basket weaving



## Local jobs for lasting change

Reddikollai is an Irula village in the Jawadhi Hills, inhabited by a smaller tribe living among the dominant Malayalee tribe. The village is situated in the highlands, making access to water problematic. Most of the families resort to distress migration for labour, as their main income from agriculture and animal husbandry is not adequate for the year. So, CMC's community health and development team decided to look for other projects to supplement income for families.

Friends of Vellore UK funded a basket weaving training course in March for a group of enthusiastic women who were motivated to learn new skills to supplement their family income. These women have now been trained in wire-basket weaving and are able to make and sell small baskets.

15 women attended the program which was held over two days in an open space in the village under a tree. On the second day afternoon they moved to the home of one of the participants as it rained. Five types of patterns were taught to the participants: Nellika design, Cross-cut design, Pooja kudai, Karupu kudai and Jasmin design. By the end of the course the women had six baskets ready for sale. They are continuing to make and sell baskets.

Friends of Vellore UK also funded a program to teach ten women from this village tailoring, and enabled the purchase of sewing machines for the women who completed the program. The training course took place over two months starting in April. The trainees were provided with refreshments and transport. One participant dropped out as she was pregnant, and nine women successfully finished the course. The trainer is from Vellore and will procure orders for the group.

The course was held from 9am to 4pm, six days a week in the tribal society building in Jammunamarathur. The women who attended made great efforts to stick with the program, leaving small children behind, and finishing their household activities (including taking the cattle out to graze) before they came to class. CMC had to cancel classes only

twice: once for a local festival and once for a death in the village.

The women were taught the mechanics of the sewing machine, how to maintain it and make small repairs to the machine. They were taught how to cut and sew fabric for blouses, skirts, dresses, shorts and hospital supplies such as gowns, baby dresses. CMC will continue to monitor the women and help them to procure orders from CMC and from the Government.

This is the first time the women of this village have been given an opportunity to be trained and have a means of earning income by themselves. Many of them have only completed Grade 5 in school (equivalent of finishing primary school). On completing the course, one of the women said in Tamil, "From the time we were born our parents only looked for the day we will get married, our teachers taught us, but we could not earn after finishing 5th grade and 8th grade, but you have given us a trade, and for this we will never forget you."

The valediction program was held in August when participants were presented with their sewing machines and certificates. Mrs Parvathy, one of the trainees, gave a report on what they had learnt and benefitted from the course. Dr Anuradha Rose gave a motivational speech and Fr Amala Vinodh addressed the trainees. After presenting the certificates Rev Dr Arul Dhas spoke about women's empowerment and motivated the trainees to continue their work. With leftover funds, CMC plan to raise some more money and continue this tailoring program.



Tailoring class



A finished basket



Travelling to class

# The gift of hearing

Friends of Vellore UK has funded cochlear implant surgeries for three children this year:

**MITHRA** is a 4-year-old child from Cholavaram village in Tamil Nadu. Her parents come from a humble background and were childless for the first ten years of their marriage. They underwent IVF treatment to conceive and were overjoyed when Mithra was born. However, their happiness was short-lived when Mithra suddenly lost her hearing aged two after suffering from a fall and a respiratory infection. As a consequence of hearing loss, she stopped speaking and started having behavioural issues. Her parents were devastated by this unforeseen challenge, but they remain determined to provide the best possible care for their daughter.

**DHANUSHREE** is a 3-year-old girl from Ariyalur village in Tamil Nadu; the first-born child in her family. She developed neonatal jaundice on day three of her life for which she received phototherapy. Despite the challenges, her family overcame all the difficulties and took her home after phototherapy. They noticed that their daughter was not speaking and responding to sounds like other children of the same age. They decided to get medical help and were heartbroken to realise that their child is congenitally deaf.

**SANDEEP** is a 5-year-old boy from Vellore. He



Dr Mary John with Mithra, Dhanushree and Sandeep and their mothers

is the second-born child with normal development. His parents noticed that their son did not speak well compared to his sibling at the same age and sought medical advice. They tried using hearing aids for 18 months along with intensive speech therapy, but this brought no benefit. They were devastated at the thought of their son not being able to ever hear or speak.

After careful evaluation, CMC's medical team concluded that cochlear implant surgery offers Dhanushree, Mithra and Sandeep the greatest chance of regaining their hearing and experiencing the world of sound around them. Unfortunately, the cost of this life-changing procedure is approximately 8 Lakh rupees (£8000), an amount that these parents are unable to afford after exhausting their resources on previous treatments. CMC Vellore had made arrangements to operate on Mithra by procuring

funds from the Tamil Nadu Government but due to unforeseen circumstances the funding was withdrawn, and surgery was put on hold.

CMC reached out to Friends of Vellore who were able to fund surgery for these three children through generous donations made by our supporters. CMC successfully implanted Dhanushree, Mithra and Sandeep on 23rd June, 28th June and 14th July respectively. They are undergoing intensive speech therapy after the devices were switched on two weeks after the surgery. Their parents are overwhelmed with the results and extremely grateful for the financial support.

Dr Mary John, on behalf of the Paediatric ENT team writes:

*Your donations have made a significant difference in Mithra, Dhanushree and Sandeep's life, providing them with the opportunity to communicate, learn, and thrive. Your support is immensely appreciated and cherished.*

Friends of Vellore UK are also continuing to fund an audiologist who screens new-borns and children for hearing loss, both in the hospital and in local schools and community areas. The audiologist also provides Auditory Verbal Therapy sessions for children who have had cochlear implants.



## Bridging the gap for Jivan

43-year-old Jivan\* is from Salem in Tamil Nadu. His wife, son and two daughters live in a large joint family. For more than 20 years, Jivan worked as a craftsman, carving idols out of metal for a living.

A few years ago, Jivan found wounds on parts of his body. These developed into ulcers and skin lesions. Visits to local hospitals gave him temporary relief. However, the wounds were recurrent. Three years ago, the skin lesions spread all over his face and his body. This made it very difficult for Jivan to work. He decided to come to CMC Vellore for treatment.

The Department of Dermatology treated his wounds and referred him for a Haematology consultation where he was diagnosed with Mycosis Fungoides – a type of blood cancer. The diagnosis shook him. He was treated with chemotherapy and radiation therapy by the Departments of Haematology and Radiation Oncology. Jivan never missed an appointment. Even though finances were strained, he would always arrive promptly for his treatment.

Jivan's health has improved and he looks much better at his most recent visit to CMC. Despite his illness, Jivan ensures that his



Jivan with his wife and daughter

# Paediatric Subsidy Fund

Every year, hundreds of families bring their children to CMC Vellore for treatment and care. Many families struggle to meet medical and related expenses to travel to Vellore from all over India. Friends of Vellore UK are sending CMC £10,000 annually to enable a paediatric subsidy fund.

This fund supports 10 children each year who are admitted to CMC Vellore for treatment or surgery. The fund is for children from poor families who would benefit from a one-off intervention with a high likelihood of a positive outcome. Below is Sadia's story:

## SADIA

Sadia felt her world crumble around her when she heard the diagnosis. The Department of Paediatrics in CMC Vellore confirmed that she had osteosarcoma in her right leg. Unfortunately, the tumour had dangerously spread. The only way to save her was to amputate her leg above the knee.

Sadia is a bright 15-year-old girl from Kolkata. Sadia's mother is a single parent who cares for her two children. She works as a domestic maid and is the sole bread winner for the family. Her husband is an alcoholic and does not support his children in any way.

Sadia had been complaining of increasing pain and swelling in her right leg. It didn't seem to be a problem until she had a fall and broke her leg in December 2022. The X-ray revealed a fracture of the right mid femur. On further investigation, the doctors also suspected a cancerous tumour above her knee. Her mother decided to bring her to CMC Vellore for further diagnosis and treatment.



Sadia\* with her mum (\*name changed)

After detailed evaluation by the Department of Paediatric Oncology, she was diagnosed with right distal femur osteosarcoma. The medical team started her on two cycles of neoadjuvant chemotherapy. As the tumour

had spread beyond the option of salvage, an above knee amputation procedure (wide excision of tumour) was performed by the paediatric orthopaedic surgeons.

Sadia recovered well after the surgery without any complication and the remaining cycles of chemotherapy were completed. However, she was devastated to lose her leg. Now she had to learn to adjust to a new way of life. She began rehabilitation for a prosthetic fitting.

In spite of the trauma of losing her leg, Sadia took on the rehabilitation program with much hope. However, her mother could not afford a prosthetic limb. She approached different authorities for financial aid but was not successful in getting any help. Our paediatric subsidy fund was able to cover the cost of the prosthetic leg. Sadia and her mother are extremely grateful for the financial support. Sadia now has a radiant smile on her face as she walks confidently with her prosthetic leg, which has made a huge difference to her.



children receive a good education.

CMC subsidised most of his treatment costs using the PTP fund, along with subsidies from the Department of Radiation Oncology. These subsidies enabled Jivan get back to normal life.

Jivan and his family were so grateful for this support. Your generous contributions make it possible for CMC to help patients like Jivan. Thank you!

\*Name changed and details shared with consent.

In our last issue we reported on baby Pratap who received surgery to correct an abnormal connection between his oesophagus and trachea. Pratap was brought to CMC a year later for his follow up. Much to the treating doctor's amazement, his father expressed his desire to contribute some of his savings to help families like his in CMC. He met the Development Office team and gave his donation. This is the kind of impact your gifts have on CMC's patients.

Donate today and see your gift bless many more!

## A gift that endures

Please consider making a gift to Friends of Vellore UK in your Will. Leaving a small percentage of your estate or a cash gift to Friends of Vellore UK could make a lasting difference to Christian Medical College Vellore and its associated mission hospitals. Did you know that you may qualify to pay Inheritance Tax at a reduced rate of 36% if you leave at least 10% of your net estate to charity?

Friends of Vellore UK have partnered with Bequeathed who offer a free Will-writing service, which you can access online at a convenient time for you, from the comfort of your own home: <https://www.bequeathed.org/fovuk>

Whether you just need to write a simple Will, or you have some questions that you need answers to, Bequeathed will connect you with a trusted solicitor to help address any issues.

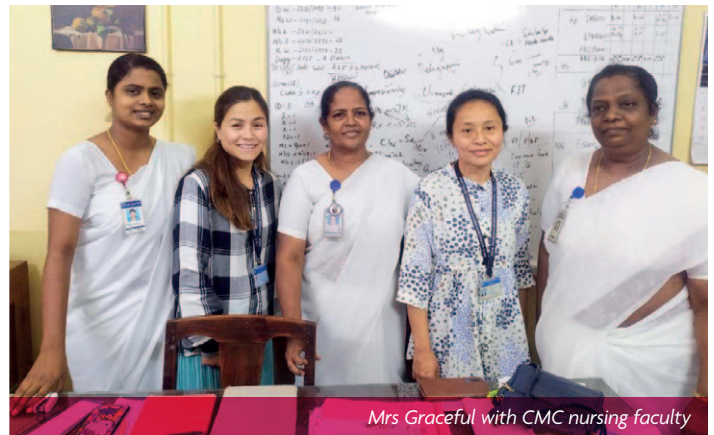
We have codicil forms if you would like to leave a legacy but have an existing will. The form is available on our website or from the office. You can specify either a single sum, which can be as little as £1, or you can bequeath a proportion of your estate, which can be anything from 1% upwards. Please do not hesitate to get professional guidance should you need it.

# Training staff from mission hospitals

The Missions Department at Christian Medical College Vellore seeks to strengthen mission hospitals in their network by facilitating training for staff in various departments of CMC Vellore. The aim is to enable mission hospital staff to enhance their skills and learn current advanced practices in both clinical and non-clinical areas and thus further develop key services of the mission hospital.



Dr Arlene at Nav Jivan Hospital



Mrs Graceful with CMC nursing faculty

Friends of Vellore UK sent a grant of £5000 to be used towards food, accommodation and travel costs. Seven candidates from four hospitals have been supported in the first half of 2023. One beneficiary was Dr Arlene Divya, who works as a paediatrician in Nav Jivan hospital, Jharkhand. This is one of the most backward districts in the country in terms of the multidimensional poverty index. Arlene joined this hospital along with her husband in August 2021 as their first ever paediatrician. Below is a write-up of her training:

*I came to CMC Vellore in March 2023 for four weeks exposure in the Paediatric ICU and Developmental Paediatrics, along with my husband, who came for exposure in haemodialysis and 2D Echo.*

*Children reach our hospital in extremely sick condition after being treated by unqualified doctors for several weeks in the rural villages. We have a lot of children with cerebral palsy as an aftermath of home deliveries conducted by untrained birth attendants.*

*Our visit to CMC Vellore was an immense help and encouragement to both of us. I spent the first two weeks in Paediatric ICU where I learnt point-of-care ultrasound. The hands-on experience of the use of various modes of non-invasive ventilation was very useful. I spent time in Developmental Paediatrics learning from occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech therapists. The guidance given about the management of disabled children in the village was extremely useful.*

*I have started putting into practice what I learnt, and also in palliative care services, which we have started recently. CMC are willing to help us set up a paediatric rehabilitation centre. We hope to combine community palliative care services along with rehabilitative services for disabled children in the villages to extend a hospital-based rehabilitation model to community-based rehabilitation.*

*I spent the third week of my training in the Neonatal ICU. I was given an opportunity to speak about our hospital in the clinical meeting. My visit to CMC gave me lot of contacts in different sub-specialties of Paediatrics which will help me to manage complicated cases in our hospital.*

*We also got to visit RUHSA. We regularly come across lots of families in our surrounding villages where the main bread winners are women, and the men are addicted to alcohol and drugs resulting in unemployment. The work at RUHSA opened our eyes to the prospects of women's empowerment, and how many of these men may be engaged in some form of vocational training and productivity. This will help bestow value to the community around us. We hope to have few resource persons from RUHSA visit us soon to kick-off these ventures in our locality too.*

*We used our evenings to give a bird's eye view about missions in North India to medical student groups and to hear from them. Faculty from CMC's Missions Department gave us lots of encouragement as to God's faithfulness and how to plan ahead for the*

*hospital along with the community from a godly kingdom perspective.*

Further beneficiaries of this grant were two teaching faculty from the College of Nursing at Dr Gordon Roberts Hospital: Ms Ibarikha Sawkmie (Vice Principal) and Mrs Graceful Darity Lyngdoh (Assistant Professor). They attended two weeks of training at CMC Vellore's College of Nursing with a keen interest to implement integration of nursing services and education. Integration is based on the understanding that nurses need skills and without skills, knowledge has minimal impact on the kind of care given to patients. Mrs Graceful writes:

*The last two weeks were very beneficial as they allowed us to learn about integration in depth. It was a treasure of an opportunity to be able to get information from the lived experience of the faculty as well as Charge Nurses. It was also an eye opener to us to be able to witness the level of dedication to duty. One Charge Nurse said, "I have worked in this hospital for 25 years. I have seen the hospital grow. As it grows, I also want to grow." We left CMC Vellore fully charged and with a renewed motivation that by the grace of God we will be able to set the motion of initiating the process of integration of nursing education and practice in our own institution, which is very much the need of the hour.*

The grant also supported dialysis training for a staff nurse working in Madhipura Christian Hospital, Bihar and training for three



staff from Reynolds Memorial Hospital, Washim to teach basic life support.

Mission Hospitals continue to be relevant in delivering quality, ethical and cost-effective healthcare across various parts of India. Many of them, being located in rural and semi-urban areas, need support in terms of enhancing and strengthening the care delivery.

Our grant has enabled CMC Vellore to

support mission hospitals through focused, tailored training and further expand healthcare access by knowledge and skill transfer. It is hoped that this will lead to increased collaboration between CMC Vellore and mission hospitals in the effort to address the healthcare gaps across the country.



Dr Arlene with a patient

## Mission Hospitals update

Friends of Vellore UK work closely with CMC's Missions Department to send grants directly to various smaller mission hospitals in CMC's network. Below are details of three initiatives that we have recently sent funds for.



New chatram at Baptist Christian Hospital Tezpur



The lab at Kotagiri Medical Fellowship Hospital

Baptist Christian Hospital Tezpur is situated in Assam, northeast India. At the end of 2021, Friends of Vellore UK sent a grant of £10,000 for them to build a Chatram. This is a building that provides basic accommodation for patients and their families who have travelled a long way for treatment and can't afford to stay elsewhere.

This building is now complete and has been

in operation since June this year. There are 8 twin rooms and 2 bathrooms.

Karigiri Hospital is just north of Vellore. It was originally set up in 1955 to serve patients from CMC with leprosy. Dr Paul Brand did a lot of his work there, and it became (and still is) a leading centre for leprosy research. However, with the declining need for treatment of leprosy patients, they have diversified to become a general hospital with 150 beds serving the northern end of Vellore (Katpadi) and the rural population around them.

This year we sent a grant of £10,000 to enable Karigiri Hospital to install a new sewage treatment plant.

Kotagiri Medical Fellowship Hospital (KMF) is situated high in the Nilgiri Mountains, 300km south-west of Vellore. It is a beautiful setting surrounded by tea plantations. This small

hospital caters to a population of almost one million, of which about 60% are from a tribal background.

In 2017, this hospital came under the management of CMC who sent staff to help renew the medical work which had declined over the last 10 years. Since then, the hospital has been growing steadily, with improved services and increasing patient numbers. New staff have joined and the locals are gaining confidence in using the patient services.

In 2019 we sent £30,000 towards upgrading their laboratory equipment. Dr Tony Abraham, the Medical Superintendent, recently wrote to say that all the machines are working well and contributing immensely to the work in the hospital. They now have five technicians (previously two) and the work has been steadily growing.

During the last financial year, KMF were able to generate nearly £25,000 in income from their upgraded laboratory. This much-needed income enables them to cover the costs of other aspects of the care they provide.



Opening of the effluent treatment plant at Karigiri



## Reaching the unreached

CMC's Low Cost Effective Care Unit (LCECU), situated slightly away from the main hospital, aims to provide quality but low cost care to the poorest inhabitants of Vellore. Patients pay a nominal amount for registration, and then are only charged for drugs and investigations according to the individual's ability to pay. LCECU run several outreach clinics in the poorest areas of Vellore, to get medical support to those that might not otherwise access healthcare services.

Since Covid, there has been an escalation of healthcare costs and the cost of living in India, which have particularly impacted poor and low middle-class families. When faced with health problems, these patients initially come to LCECU which provides free hospitalisation. However, some need to be referred to CMC's main hospital for emergency procedures which they would struggle to afford. LCECU's social worker carries out a home visit and, for those in need, the LCECU Patient Support Fund can be used to cover the cost of their care.

This year, Friends of Vellore UK sent £25,000 to this fund. Guna was one of the beneficiaries:

### GUNA

Guna\*, aged 68, lives in Saidapet, Vellore along with his elder son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter in a double-roomed tiled-roof house. His wife passed away in 2018 due to a

lung infection. His youngest son lives a few streets away but doesn't take care of him. Guna used to work in the local vegetable market as a vendor earning Rs. 300–400 a day (£3-4). His oldest son has the same job.

Guna was in good health until June 2023 when he began experiencing chest pain. He was taken to the district hospital where he was given some medicine, was told not to worry and was sent home.

His pain gradually worsened, becoming constant and excruciating, notably aggravated by walking or standing. Concurrently, he developed weakness, initially affecting his lower limbs and then progressing to the point where he could not stand or walk without support. Subsequently, he suffered a fall in his bathroom, rendering him bedridden. He also experienced trouble in urination, ultimately requiring catheterization. Upon examination, Guna displayed severe weakness in both lower

extremities, accompanied by numbness below the hip level.

A few days later he was admitted to LCECU for treatment. He was found to have damage to the vertebral bones of his spine, and pus collection around some of the vertebrae. He was referred to CMC's main hospital where he underwent emergency spinal surgery. His surgery and hospital costs were supported by LCECU from the Patient Support Fund.

Tissue culture taken during surgery confirmed *Salmonella typhi* infection (typhoid) which was treated with appropriate antibiotics for two weeks. LCECU provided physiotherapy to aid Guna's rehabilitation.



*\*Name changed*



Collecting water in urban Vellore



A community clinic run by LCECU

Now, Guna is praising God for his recovery and that he can walk without much difficulty. His oldest son is very happy to see his father being mostly independent. LCECU is grateful to be able to help yet another poor patient with expensive medical treatment costs through generous donations to their Patient Support Fund.

In addition to supporting treatment costs, this year we have begun funding two new initiatives at LCECU. Our funds will go towards establishing community-based palliative care and cervical cancer screening in the low resourced urban areas served by the Low Cost Effective Care unit.

The first-year costs for both initiatives combined are £40,000. Just over half of this sum covers staffing costs for a doctor, nurse, clinical psychologist, occupational therapist, driver and project coordinator. It also includes the purchase of a vehicle to access the interior parts of Vellore town where the roads are not good, and to transport sick patients from the community. The remaining costs are for equipment and testing for cervical cancer.

We are using our Christmas appeal to raise funds for the palliative care side of this project. This initiative involves training a team in palliative care provision, identifying patients, assessment and management of

symptoms. The aim is to provide comprehensive end-of-life care to the deprived urban population in Vellore, thus improving the quality of life of patients and their families who are facing challenges associated with life-threatening illness. You can read more about it in the enclosed leaflet.

Cervical cancer continues to be a major public health problem in India in the absence of widespread organised cervical screening programmes. The incidence and mortality rates of cervical cancer are higher in low-income urban areas due to a lack of access to screening and treatment options. LCECU will implement community-based cervical cancer screening for early detection and increased survival rates. The project will serve as a model for other low-income populations. The team will conduct a house-to-house survey to identify women in the community who are at risk of cervical cancer, predominantly those in the age group 30-60 (estimated to be 2500 women) and encourage them to participate in screening. They will also conduct awareness camps in the community to promote the importance of cervical cancer screening. Women with abnormal screening results will be referred for further evaluation and treatment.

## OBITUARY:

# Dr Karna Dev (Chandu) Bardhan



Dr Karna Dev Bardhan, known as Chandu, was born in 1940 in Jhansi. His father was a pathologist who was in the Army. Chandu went to the famous Doon School in Dehradun. After he completed his schooling, he started his medical training at Christian Medical College Vellore as part of the batch of 1958 students.

A keen scholar, he won several awards including the medal for the Best Outgoing Student.

In the year that he graduated, he came first in Madras University.

In 1964, Chandu was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship and moved to Oxford where he completed his DPhil, 'Studies on Intrinsic Factor in Man'. In 1973, he was appointed a substantive Consultant Gastroenterologist at the age of 32 years at Rotherham District General Hospital, a non-academic centre.

Chandu single-handedly built up the Gastroenterology Department and a research unit which became a centre of excellence both nationally and internationally. He set up an able team of lab staff, nurses and secretaries and eventually the renowned 'Bardhan Research and Education Trust' (BRET). A total of 54 grants were awarded until he retired in 2014. The work of BRET is now continued at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals.

He loved his work, and his infectious enthusiasm motivated and inspired his staff and students. His leadership and vision, together with his willingness to help, drew people to work with his team in Rotherham. The success of his BRET-mentees gave him far greater joy than his own personal accomplishments.

Chandu's rigour in clinical practice and research couldn't be deterred by his personal health challenges. His compassion and dedication to the wellbeing of his patients and colleagues, earned him great love and respect from his patients and staff. His life thrived on the motto 'Not to be ministered unto, but to minister.'

He is the first ever recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the British Society

of Gastroenterology. The town of Rotherham recognised him as 'Citizen of the Year' and made him a Freeman of the Borough. He was subsequently honoured with an OBE by the Queen, for his contributions and impact.

Chandu passed away peacefully at home on 5th April 2023 following a stroke he had in June 2022. He is survived by his wife, Dr Gouri Bardhan (MBBS batch of 1959-60), a retired consultant haematologist, his son, Satyajeet, a philanthropy strategist, his daughter, Suchitra, a paediatric gastroenterologist, and his three grandchildren.

Chandu's memoirs entitled 'An Improbable Journey in Medicine: A Story of Courage and Enterprise' are available to buy on Amazon. They are fascinating to read. All proceeds from the book are going to food charities.

# Safely into Adulthood

Adolescence, the period of transition between childhood and adulthood, involves significant change in all domains of development: biological, cognitive, psychosocial and emotional. It is a time to develop knowledge and skills whilst learning how to manage emotions and relationships. Although adolescents are increasingly active agents in their own development process, as they explore, experiment and learn, they still require guidance and support.

CMC's Rural Unit of Health and Social Affairs (RUHSA) coordinate several initiatives, funded by Friends of Vellore UK, which aim to empower young people through life skills education and career guidance. Through these activities, they hope to lower the rate of suicide and substance misuse in this vulnerable group.

A team visit secondary schools in the area and deliver life skills education. This includes teaching on reproductive health, puberty, personal hygiene, physical exercise and nutrition. Students are taught about problem solving, decision making, time management,



Menstrual education session

stress management and communication skills. Summer camps run alongside the schools program.

66 children aged 3 to 18 years from RUHSA campus (staff children) and from the neighbouring villages attended a three-day camp on the RUHSA campus. This included art and craft sessions, a puppet show and a treasure hunt. The camp helped students to develop their learning, imagination and social skills. The value of inclusivity was indirectly promoted by bringing children from two different social environments together to interact and learn together.



Annual run

A two-day summer camp was conducted at Kamarajarapuram village. This was one of the villages which were severely affected by the Palar River Floods in 2021. 78 children from 6 to 16 years along with eight community volunteers participated in the camp. The camp focused on play-based learning and encouraged children to exercise their talents through songs, art, craft and dance.

At both camps, the children were taught about children's rights, interpersonal skills and life coping skills. There were also educational sessions on fitness, nutrition and healthy eating. All the children and volunteers

received a health check-up including a sight test and dental screening.

To promote a healthy lifestyle, RUHSA run a youth sport programme. Children are given coaching in various sports including volleyball and athletics. An annual run raises awareness of the benefits of physical activity in preventing lifestyle diseases. The event includes runs of 5 or 10 km, a 5 km walk, and a 2 km walk for small children and senior citizens. All ages can participate but the focus is particularly on youth. This year's event in March saw 345 people participate.



Career guidance

RUHSA is also providing counselling services and career guidance sessions for young people. One-on-one, need-based counselling for adolescents and family members is available with a psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker or nutritionist. Career guidance sessions help the young people to select and pursue a career. They are given help to complete forms and apply for grants. Guidance and coaching are also provided for those interested in applying for courses run by CMC Vellore (including nursing and allied health courses).

## Easterine Mills-Clarke

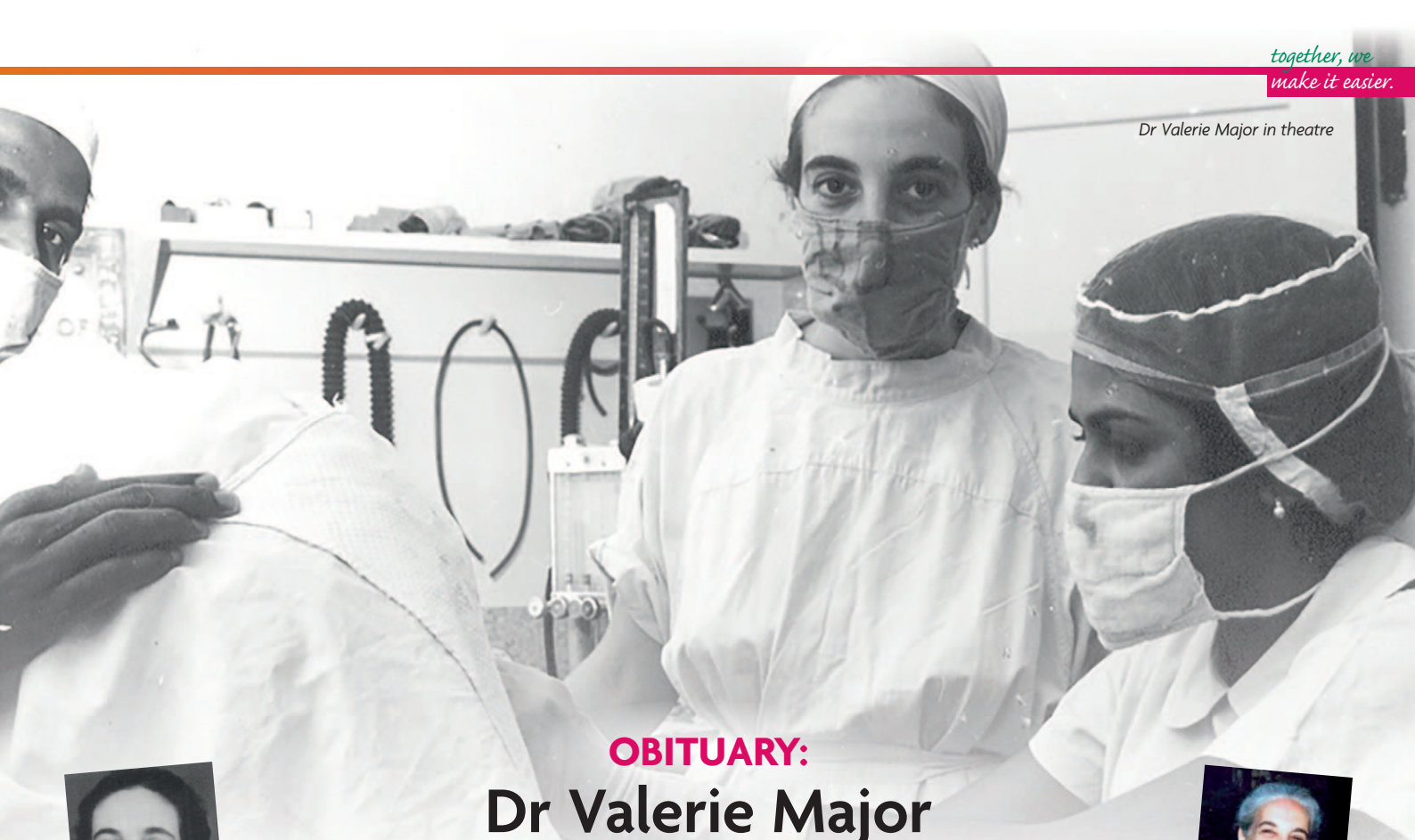
It is with great sadness that we inform you of the recent death of Easterine Mills-Clarke. She served as Treasurer of Friends of Vellore UK and of the UK CMC Alumni Association for three years until April 2023, when she stepped down due to ill health.



Easterine was an alumna of CMC from the batch of 1970. Having been unable to continue her career in medicine, she switched to accountancy, working in this sector for 16 years. Following that, she and her husband set up their own taxi company and worked as taxi drivers. They had many loyal and interesting customers. One of her most fascinating clients was

the Chief Prosecutor from the International Criminal Court in the Hague.

She spent the last years of her life living in Anglesey in North Wales. Her abiding love for CMC and its mission inspired her. We are so grateful for her joyful service and wisdom undergirded by her faith and desire to see Jesus glorified.



## OBITUARY:

# Dr Valerie Major



Valerie Major was born in Cardiff on 19th May 1935. She was clever, hardworking and very determined. She managed to obtain one of the very few female places at medical school and was the first in her family to study medicine, inspiring successive generations to follow in her footsteps.



In 1967 Dr Major won a scholarship prize that enabled her to work abroad for a year. Inspired by hearing at speech by Dr Gwenda Lewis (also from Cardiff) who founded CMC's Department of Anaesthesia, she chose to go to CMC Vellore. Whilst there she was struck by the need. So, in 1969, she joined CMC Vellore's Department of Anaesthesia supported by the Church Missionary Society.

She was promoted to Professor in 1973 and became Head of the Department in 1977. Her work for CMC combined her love of medicine and her love for the Lord.

She was well respected by her students as being firm yet having a kind nature. Her patients had excellent care. Once a surgeon was faced with a risky emergency operation. He wanted only Dr Valerie to administer the anaesthesia. Even though she was in Chennai that day, she immediately travelled back to Vellore. That was her level of dedication to her calling.

The Department developed greatly under her leadership and guidance. Her emphasis on patient safety remains their central concern. Those she trained describe her as 'a teacher par excellence', and one previous head of Anaesthesia notes, "Her teachings were based on evidence, even before evidence-based medicine came in a big way."

Dr Chandran Jepegnanam, who worked with Valerie Major at CMC Vellore and is now based in the UK writes:

*Many anaesthetists all over the world owe their professional career to Dr Major. She was an excellent anaesthetist. She was very conscious of where she worked and the resources we had. She always had the mindset that it needed to be worth the change to make the change.*

*She became the professor and head of department very early in her career. She ran a very tight ship. She never expected anything of anyone else than she wouldn't do herself. She was respected by all the senior surgeons and feared by most of the junior trainees. She was very protective of her own colleagues and trainees. She would always stand up for us, but if we were wrong, she would tell us in no uncertain terms in private. She expected a lot from us.*

*As her teacher her mantra was always basics, basics, basics. She had an ability to simplify complex concepts. She was the envy of most trainees in other departments. She really prioritised teaching and training. When she spoke on national conferences, everybody wanted to be there to hear what she had to say. She reminded us that we are dealing with people not patients.*

*For her amazing work she was recognised by the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland in 1987 with the Pasque award for distinguished services to teaching and practices of anaesthesia in India.*

*She was a woman of faith who genuinely cared about her trainees and colleagues, demonstrating this in practical ways. Nothing was too much trouble for her.*

Dr Major retired from Vellore in 1995 and moved to Wales, switching specialty to work in palliative care. She served for a time on the board of Friends of Vellore UK.

CMC recently honoured her by naming their new anaesthetic skills lab after her in grateful appreciation of her long years of outstanding service and dedication to patient safety and postgraduation education. The Dr Valerie Major Skills Laboratory is a state-of-the-art simulation centre, enabling training on simple procedures through to advanced techniques. This is a much-needed facility given the rapid growth in the number and complexity of operations performed at CMC.

Dr Valerie Major died peacefully on 2nd June 2023 at the University Hospital of Wales. She leaves a lasting legacy in the Department of Anaesthesia, inspiring those following after her to glorify God through their service. We thank God for her.

## Dr Valerie Major reflects on CMC in the 1960s

This article was originally written for the Autumn 2012 Friends of Vellore UK newsletter.

When I think back to CMC and Friends of Vellore in the 1960s, I am reminded of the debt of gratitude that I owe to Friends of Vellore.

I was a junior anaesthetist working in Birmingham when I went to a scientific meeting where the speaker was Dr Gwenda Lewis who happened to come from my home city of Cardiff. She was speaking about her experiences in CMC where she had started the Department of Anaesthesia. She was in a wheelchair having contracted polio when doing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on a child. I found her very impressive.

Some years later, when I had moved to work in the Cardiff hospitals, I was given the opportunity of a year's leave of absence to widen my experience. I remembered Dr Gwenda and wrote to Friends of Vellore. Julie Sharp was the Director, and she was so helpful and encouraging. She found details of a Nuffield research scholarship. I applied and was accepted, finished working in Cardiff midweek and flew to India that weekend with little idea of what to expect! I can remember



Operating theatre at CMC's Chittoor campus

saying to my mother, "Don't worry – I can stand anything for a year!"

That proved to be wide of the mark. I really appreciated what CMC was doing – trying to keep a good standard of medical care and yet making it available to the local population while all the time being limited by financial constraints. I can still vividly recall resuscitating a child who had drowned in a tub of water, and saying to the Sister that the child needed hydrocortisone immediately and hearing Sister say to one of the nurses to go and find out if the family could afford it – a far

cry from the NHS and the start of my enthusiasm for the PTP scheme.

So much of the work was carried out by junior doctors training for a postgraduate degree and there was a tremendous emphasis on training them. They were a great bunch of enthusiastic young staff, well aware of the difference they could make when they returned to their home base. But to do this in the anaesthetic department and carry the workload needed more staff, and here I felt I could help.

So, I came home, worked my notice while offering to the Church Mission Society (CMS), who accepted me. I returned to CMC for what I thought might be a few years. However, this turned into a total of 28 years and then retirement was mandatory for Professors of my age! I really thank God for the opportunity I was given and must express my gratitude to CMC for their support all that time, but it was all initiated by that scholarship which Friends of Vellore found for me – so thank you Friends of Vellore and long may you continue to support CMC in so many ways.

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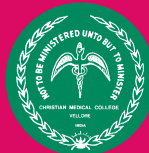
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