

Friends of Vellore

NSW branch of the Australian Board of Vellore Christian Medical College & Hospital

Office Bearers

President:	Dr. Robyn Bradley
Vice President:	Dr. Liza Jacob
Secretary:	Dr. Gordon Thomas
Treasurer / News Editor	Dr. Stephen Aseervatham



May 2021

Message by Dr. Robyn Bradley, President of the NSW FOV Support During the Covid Crisis.

Dear Friends of Vellore, friends, and many who have been so concerned and wondering how they can assist the people of India,

We are all too aware of the tragedy currently taking place in India, and that the figures we see are probably grossly underrepresenting the extent of this Covid wave.

We have been in touch with the Directorate at Vellore as how to focus assistance. This is a summary of their response.

Vellore is currently trying to manage 700 Covid beds but the Government has asked

this be increased to 1200. A very challenging task as “beds” means medical workforce, equipment, medications etc.

Three major problems arise immediately from this.

Firstly, the availability of trained medical staff.

The final exams both for postgraduate and



undergraduates in medicine have been postponed, and hence an immediate shortfall in specialist and junior workforce.

Secondly, there is a shortage of life saving equipment, ventilators, monitors etc. The current wave has brought sicker and younger patients needing more intense care.

There is shortfall in medications, and although oxygen is ok at present, this will represent only 20% of what will be needed.

Thirdly, the vaccine programme is stalled due to costs.

The Govt has opened procurement to private players but at a higher cost and with limited supplies.

The current cost is higher than most can afford at Rs 250 (A\$5), of which 150 goes to the Govt and the rest to costs of needles, syringes, running the programme.

The Director has mentioned about their urgent needs, which includes ventilators, BiPAP machines, portable oxygen concentrators, PPE consumables and also the cost involved with the vaccination campaign. Funds are urgently raised in Australia which will go directly to Vellore and be made available for use straightaway.

If you would like to donate towards this, it would be wonderful, and your donations are tax deductible. As a rule, none of the tax-deductible donations are used for our overhead expenses. Details regarding how you could donate is provided, herewith.

Thank you; one cannot stop thinking of the pain and suffering, grief, and loss there at the present.

Yours sincerely,

Robyn Bradley

Reflections on 2020-21

Dear all, it is almost a year since we communicated with you. Lots of things have happened in the meantime. COVID has dominated our lives, something which was beyond our wildest imagination. Hope you all were safe and well.

Having come out of the first wave quite successfully, CMC finds itself in having to handle a second wave. First time around the institution had the luxury of having a

couple of months to get ready before the first patient was admitted. During this period of 'COVID Preparedness', lots of planning went into getting ready for the pandemic. CMC had its protocols and infection control, quarantine, and treatment guidelines in place. Allocation of beds including ICU beds and equipment for ventilation was the priority. The Australian FOV was able to help CMC by transferring about A\$350,000.00 for procuring ventilators and other accessories: this was very much appreciated. Modifications were made to normal wards converting them to ICU beds. Suitable air conditioning was a major part of it. Staff were retrained and skills were upgraded to deal with an unknown disease. The hospital was segregated into COVID and non-COVID zones manned by different teams.

There was emphasis on staff protection despite the considerable cost in procuring PPE. By God's grace there were no fatalities among the staff.

The hospital created a 'COVID Command Centre' to coordinate several activities as a 24-hour staffed facility. There were regular zoom meetings of the various stake holders on a regular basis and regular updates were made available to the staff as well as to the community.

At the pandemic's peak there were 880 designated beds for COVID including 90+ ICU beds. Over 10,300 were admitted and treated during the first wave.

Pandemic affected finances significantly as there was a drastic reduction in routine patient care which was the single source of income. There was a cap on hospital charges for COVID patients which in most cases did not cover the cost of oxygen and lifesaving medications. Staff apart from opting to take a deferment of part of their salary also donated A\$800,000 for COVID expenses. About 20% of the Hospital's turnover was used for charitable work. CMC is thankful to various FOVs, alumni and well-wishers for their donations.

Sometimes good things come out of adversities. CMC had to communicate with many of the patients with chronic ailments living at distance via telemedicine. It was very much accepted by all concerned and possibly could become the 'norm' in future management of patients. Education for students also were conducted via zoom and

thus there was no interruption to their studies. Apart from training all the health workers at CMC, the distant education programs were created for training 5000 doctors and 10,000 community level workers around the country in how to manage COVID.

Robyn mentioned in her report about the second wave and the problems CMC is facing. In an email from the Director sent to us a couple of days ago, he mentioned that



they have at present over 1000 patients in their care. They have peaked their oxygen beds and are short on ventilators. They have put some order, but the first lot will arrive only by 15th May. There is an acute shortage of first level ventilators (BiPAP machines). CMC had to turn away 35 – 40 patients every day as they do not have any more

oxygen beds.

Other News

The opening of the Kannigapuram complex was put off as it was used for treating COVID patients and thus not started functioning as a tertiary referral hospital. The second wave is going to delay it further. The old nurses' quarters in the town campus have been renovated into the orthopaedic complex named after Dr. Paul Brand. It has 105 beds with 11 state of the art operating theatres and 11 High dependency beds. The opening ceremony was held on 3rd May 2021. Unfortunately, it is not going to be used for the intended purpose as it has been set aside for treating the COVID patients and the HDU being upgraded to ICU beds.



About us

Due to the COVID pandemic we did not have any get together during the past year. The AGM of the Australian Board which under normal circumstances would have been held

in Sydney was conducted via Zoom. J. V. Peter presented an update on the happenings at Vellore, which was mostly to do with management of COVID. There are some changes to the Directors. Stephen and Richard continue to be the President and Treasurer, respectively. David Runia moved from being the vice president to take up the position as the secretary. Mahiban Thomas a CMC alumnus and faciomaxillary surgeon from Darwin was elected as the vice president. Sharon Thomas also a CMC alumnus and a GP / Gynaecologist from Gold Coast took up the Publicity officer position.

Our Support to the work done at CMC Vellore.

We are thankful to you our friends who have been extremely generous with your donations in the past years and also during the first wave of Pandemic in India. When the news was splashed around the various media about the recent resurgence of COVID, many of you, without any soliciting from us, sent your donations. We thank you for your kind thoughts.

From what we believe, CMC would very much appreciate whatever we could transfer to them to help them with their various needs. From the funds the Australian Vellore Board had in hand, it transferred A\$110,000.00 to Vellore, a couple of days ago.

If you are moved to contribute, you could either send your donations by either Direct Bank Debit or by cheque.

Direct Bank debit:

Friends of Vellore NSW

BSB 062 827

Ac.No. 1011 9987

If you wish to donate by cheques, please make it payable to 'Australian Board CMCH Support Fund' and post it to P O Box 3040, Valentine NSW 2280.

Thank you again for your continuing support to CMC Vellore.

Keep safe.

Best wishes

Stephen Aseervatham

Web Address of the Australian FOV: australianfov.net.au