



ASHWINI & The Gudalur Adivasi Hospital Newsletter 2008

The ASHWINI team wishes you a very happy and prosperous New Year. We thank you once again for your encouragement and support.

ASHWINI's vision of a health program for the tribals of the Gudalur valley that is accessible, acceptable and owned by the community is becoming a reality as each day goes by....

Highlights of the year

The **Dr KS Sanjivi award** for best institution was given to ASHWINI in 2008. Radhakrishnan (President) and Subramaniam (Secretary) received the award in a function at Chennai.



Training of Village Health Volunteers continues to be one of the main activities. Health volunteers are encouraged to take responsibility for the health of their village.

Tribal staff and Trainees: This team continues to work with commitment and enthusiasm taking on more and more responsibilities each year. There are seven trainees at present, five having joined this year.

The Community Health Program continues to focus on key issues like maternal and child care, Tuberculosis, mental illness, sickle cell disease control and in increasing awareness about HIV and AIDS. This year with the help of the Alcoholics Anonymous, a number of sessions were held in the villages to discuss the problem of substance abuse (mainly alcohol).

The Hospital is getting busier by the day. Outpatients and admissions have been at an all time high. The present building is crammed and we are eagerly awaiting the completion of the new building.

Dr Mrudula who has been with us for almost 6 years now, takes responsibility for the bulk of the hospital work. Dr Clement from Bangalore, and Dr. Dulari from Vellore have been great assets in keeping the hospital and the peripheral programs going. Drs Nandakumar and Shyla continue to work concentrating more on setting up systems and training.

Speciality clinics have become routine now thanks to the support of visiting doctors, many of who are from St Johns Medical College, Bangalore.

Dr Roberts and his team from Paediatric surgery, Dr Ramesh from ENT, Dr Saji and his team from Orthopaedics, Dr Rajalekshmy from Physical medicine- their inputs have increased the quality of care at GAH manyfold. Special thanks also to Dr Vinoo and Pramila, a surgeon, neonatologist couple and Dr Rekha and Kurien the Gynaecologist couple from Chennai and to Dr. Colin John from Narayana Hrudulaya for their invaluable services.

The Medical Student Elective Program has been very popular. it is helping us raise much needed funds.

Sobi and Reshmi from Imperial College, London comment: **"This elective has been an amazing experience. Over the last month we have renewed our passion for medicine, faced with the incredible enthusiasm and commitment of the doctors we have worked with".**

Construction of the new Building has been progressing well. We hope to complete the first block by April 2009 and move in. Donations have been coming in from many friends and relatives and we are optimistic about being able to complete this phase. Please visit www.ashwini.org/building.php for the latest updates.

Participation in the Global indigenous Stop TB Expert Meeting:

Mr.Sreedharan, one of the senior animators and Dr.Nandakumar participated in the meeting addressing the problem of Tuberculosis among tribals held in Toronto, Canada. The surprising finding was that indigenous people all over the world, be they from rich or poor countries, have very similar problems! Poor housing, overcrowding, poverty and malnutrition being responsible for the increasing incidence of TB.

Funding Support this year. . .

The Government of Tamil Nadu through its Health Systems Project has been a major funder this year. All tribal admission costs have been covered under "The Bed Grant Program". The mobile outreach van and the sickle cell program are other activities supported by them. The HIV awareness program is supported by **TANSACS**.

Kethi's baby from Kadamakolly village had a severe lung infection and needed to be referred to The Medical College. The parents were petrified. Word reached the village and in a couple of hours every man and woman from this small hamlet had arrived at the hospital. A staff member would take them in a vehicle. Rs1000 is given for incidental expenses. Within minutes all the women had taken out their gold nose rings- their only saving. They planned to pawn this for Rs.1500.



The generosity of these simple people, who have so little, brought tears to all our eyes. When forced to integrate with the mainstream, we hope the tribals will be able to retain some of these precious values!

Sir Ratan Tata Trust (S.R.T.T) supports the Insurance and the Community Mental Health Programs. Funding for both these came to an end in March 2008 and we are discussing possibilities of further support from SRTT.

Charities Advisory Trust, UK, through its "Good Gifts" Program has supported much needed activities like maternal care and cardiac surgeries for children.

American Tamil Medical Association continues to support the ATMA ICU project and the Sickle cell program.

Our thanks to Hari Prabhaker and the **Tribal India Health Foundation** for their continued involvement and support.

The Toshniwal Trust has made funding available for setting up of "The Toshniwal Dental Clinic"

Many individuals and organizations have donated to us through "**Give India Foundation**"

Corpus Fund: Thanks to our staunch supporters this has reached **Rs. 12 lakhs**. We still have a long way to go to reach our target of **Rs 100 lakhs** to ensure stability of our health care system.

Looking ahead.....

The focus of the work in the next few years will be on decentralizing the community health program and in improving the management skills of the tribal team. Systems will be set up that will make it possible to run the hospital and the area centres in an efficient way. Work on this has already started and the team is all enthusiastic about taking on these added responsibilities.

Progress in other sectors . . .

Adivasi Munnetra Sangam has launched its **2nd Land Rights Campaign** six months ago. Intensive activity is going on in all the villages to assert rights over Land and Forests. The Adivasi community has been demanding implementation of the Act conferring Forest Rights to adivasis.

Under our **Savings Program**, young adivasi girls have mobilised more than Rs.3.5 lakhs as Savings from adivasi families – a tremendous achievement. Adivasi children from various villages too have saved more than Rs.70,000.

The **Education program** has managed to increase school enrollment of children and bring down the drop-out rate dramatically. Heartening to see parents demanding good quality education, not just any kind of schooling!

Donations in India are exempt from income tax under section 80G of the income tax act. Money can be transferred directly to our account in State Bank of India, Gudalur (A/c No. 11317309532)
Tax deductible donations can be made in the US through our website
www.ashwini.org/donations.php

Have a Happy and Prosperous New Year!!

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