



ASHWINI

NEWS LETTER

2024

Welcome to this year's edition of our newsletter, where we bring you the latest updates, exciting news, and valuable insights to keep you informed and connected.

NEW RECRUITS



We are thrilled to welcome two incredible couples to our team: **Dr. Royson**, a surgeon with a fellowship in colorectal surgery and **Dr. Evelina**, a gynecologist along with **Dr. Patrick**, a plastic surgeon and **Dr. Anju**, an anesthesiologist. **Dr. Aiswarya**, a periodontist has also joined our team.

Dr. Rayna from St. John's Medical College, Bangalore, has joined us as part of her two-year rural service commitment. We are excited to have them join our team!

EMPOWERING FUTURES: TRAINING, INTERNSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARENESS PROGRAMS



We are proud to share that the 8th batch of the Auxiliary Nursing and Midwifery program has enrolled 17 students, comprising 8 tribal and 9 non-tribal participants highlighting a significant milestone in our commitment to inclusive healthcare education. Additionally, **Chithra** and **Nithya** have joined the General Nursing and Midwifery program in Kotagiri as of October 2024, further strengthening our efforts to empower future healthcare leaders ASHWINI hosted students from across the globe, including 3 Master of Social Work students, 4 Psychology students, and 5 Master of Public Health students from leading institutions such as Azim Premji University, AIIMS Rishikesh and Tata Institute of Social

Sciences. Additionally, 10 medical students from the UK, Singapore and Australia spent 4-6 weeks with us, learning about rural and tribal, health and development.



As part of the ICMR research grant on life skills training for Adivasi adolescents, we trained community facilitators using NIMHANS modules. From October 25-27, 2024, over 30 participants from the community attended a certification program at ASHWINI, led by Dr. Srikala Bharath and Dr. Sugnyani Patil. The training focused on life skills facilitation, with participants reporting increased self-awareness and a commitment to conducting practical sessions, aiming to build a network of trained facilitators for the community.



In June 2024, 30 young medical students and doctors took part in our **Rural Sensitisation Program** at Gudalur. This immersive experience sparked deep reflection on rural healthcare, culminating in powerful discussions on the challenges facing rural communities in India.

Dr. Aiswarya joined us for a month through the **Travel Fellowship Program** and worked closely with our team at the Differently Abled Centre to enhance training and further expand the range of products at the center.

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMME UPDATE



We're elated to share that the Rom Reddy Family Foundation, through SATTVA, has extended funding for our Comprehensive Nutrition Program for an additional year. This year, we are focusing on maternal and infant health while continuing efforts to improve nutrition for children under the age of 5. Significant progress has been made in improving the nutritional status of mothers and children since the previous calendar year.

Our Community Mental Health Program is celebrating 18 years of service. We've expanded our team with **Sumayya** and **Catherine**, supporting 500 individuals. We're also collaborating with the Government to secure pensions for those with severe mental illnesses and utilizing the ECRC in Ooty for rehabilitation. Two service users at ECRC are making impactful progress, and are participating in a cultural event. We are also exploring a partnership with The Banyan to establish a "Home-Again" facility for community reintegration.

Initiated in March 2024, the Community-based Stroke Care and Prevention Program, in partnership with three rural mission hospitals and Christian Medical College, Vellore, is now in its 9th month. **Kasthuri**, our physiotherapist and **Manju**, our staff nurse (now trained as a stroke nurse), are utilizing their CMC-Vellore training to lead community visits and training sessions, fostering effective stroke care and prevention in the region.



Our Point-Of-Care Program, aimed at reducing diagnostic delays and improving treatment access, is now in its second phase. Two of our ANM graduates, **Vidya** and **Sheeba**, have freshly completed a two-week exposure visit at Bangalore Baptist Hospital to enhance their skills as Nurse Technicians. With renewed funding from the Microland Foundation (MLF) until March 2025, we are now focusing on villages with significant access challenges to showcase the feasibility of this model.

Additionally, we're excited about a major IT infrastructure upgrade through MLF's large-scale IT revamp for all organizations in Gudalur, starting with ACCORD and ASHWINI.

NEW COLLABORATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES



A big shout out to EPICOR and its team for volunteering to paint and brighten the space at our Differently Abled Centre with their generous CSR support! We're truly grateful for their wonderful contribution!

As a representative of Community Health Programs in ASHWINI, Dr.Ajith spoke at the 50th Mid Annual Meet of Medico Friends Circle and consulted with several panel discussions at the Azim Premji Foundation and University for programs on Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, fellowships for health system strengthening and public health practice at grassroots levels.

Our Community Mental Health Program is entering a new chapter, as we partner with the Center for Mental Health Law and Policy (CMHLP), Pune, in adapting Atmiyata, their successful peer-driven model to the Adivasi villages of Gudalur. Through this model, the health volunteers will be skilled as Mental Health Champions to understand and address Common Mental Health Illnesses (CMIs) and refer Severe Mental Health Illnesses (SMIs) to the hospital.

This would have been impossible without the support and guidance of the Azim Premji Foundation. In October 2024, Nitish from CMHLP spent 3 days interacting with the Social Workers and Health Animators to discuss the way forward. In the coming months, our team is poised to finish the needs assessment and stakeholder mapping for this adaptation.



Our collaboration with CMC-Vellore's Bioengineering Department has led to a novel bio-design approach for community rehabilitation. Dr. Sivakumar and his students, Divakar and Sujith, visited our center to explore adapting their stroke rehabilitation robot for resource-limited settings. We're excited about co-designing solutions for grassroots challenges through this partnership.

EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES, MAKE AN IMPACT



For those with a passion to make a difference and connect with rural communities, explore the links below. Step into a world of opportunity, where your skills and aspirations can transform lives in rural spaces. Don't miss out on the chance to be part of something truly impactful!

<http://ruralhospitalnetwork.org/>

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

We would like to extend our sincerest thanks to all our generous donors and well-wishers for your continued support. Your contributions have been vital in propelling our mission forward and we are deeply grateful for your unwavering commitment. Thanks to you, we are making a tangible and lasting difference. Your generosity is truly appreciated.

Thank you once again for standing with us!



WAY FORWARD

In 2025, our focus will be on strengthening village-based approaches to address critical issues such as nutrition, mental health, suicide prevention, and substance abuse. We aim to build resilience at the village level through active community participation and ownership. With strong support from our sister organizations, we plan to enhance collaboration across various levels, creating synergies that amplify our impact.

Our team has grown with the addition of four specialists who will work closely with the Community Health Team and local leaders and will help in the impactful, community-led initiatives.

To further our mission, we are investing in technology-driven solutions to improve diagnostics and deliver affordable care at the village level. In parallel, we are forging partnerships for academic exchanges to bridge access gaps, promote early identification of health challenges, and strengthen community capabilities. Through this collective effort, we strive to create sustainable, locally owned solutions that foster lasting change and improve the quality of life in our villages.

DONATIONS

To join our efforts or make a contribution, kindly contact us at ashwinigudalur@gmail.com

In India, we are exempt from income tax under section 80G of the income tax act. Money can be transferred directly to our account in SBI, Gudalur as ASHWINI DONATIONS, Current account No: 35765454150 IFSC Code: SBIN 001016

In the USA -Tax deductible donations can be made by check to Vidyalay.org Foundation Inc and mailed to Ms. Asmita Shendye, 35 Meyer Drive, Clifton, NJ 07012
OR

Make an online donation through Tribal India Health Foundation (<http://www.tihf.org.in/>) and click the “donate” button on the page “How you can help.”

Kindly notify us of your contribution to facilitate seamless accounting procedures.
Donation web page: <https://ashwini.org/donate/>



CERTIFICATION & ACCREDITATION



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