One Bed, Then a Teaching Hospital

How Vellore Built a Respected Hospital That Keeps Its Prices Low

CMC VELLORE · VELLORE · TAMIL NADU · ELEVEN SITES







An outpatient queue at dawn. Keeping costs low is the hospital's whole argument.

1900
a one-bed dispensary
opened by Dr Ida S. Scudder

2,873
beds today
across eleven hospital sites

~8,000
outpatients a day
and about 2,000 inpatients

100
MBBS (medical degree) places a year
with around 2,500 students enrolled in all

CMC Vellore (Christian Medical College) started as one bed in 1900 and became one of the hospitals India looks to as a benchmark, while keeping to a rule that treatment must stay affordable to the people around it.

The list of Indian firsts runs through it: the country's first College of Nursing in 1946, the world's first reconstructive surgery for leprosy in 1948, India's first open-heart surgery in 1961, first kidney transplant in 1971 and first bone marrow transplant in 1986.

The part worth looking for is underneath: the Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs (RUHSA) and Community Health and Development (CHAD), the units that serve the villages around Vellore and where every student is posted. The teaching hospital grew out of that rural work.

HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE

Ask for the community health unit, not only the main hospital. CHAD serves a quarter of a million people and explains the rest.

Go and stand in it.

CMC Vellore

Every sheet in this set points to a place you can visit: a sorting platform, a solarised health centre, a processing floor, a driving lesson. It is real work, and all of it is open to visitors.

WHERE TO GO



The main hospital, central Vellore

The outpatient queue, and the scale of the operation.



CHAD, Bagayam

The community hospital serving about 250,000 people.



RUHSA, KV Kuppam

A 70-bed secondary unit, 25 km out, where students are posted.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR THE ROOM

01 Vellore holds quality and price together where most systems trade one for the other. What makes that possible, and does it travel?

02 Every student is posted to a rural unit. What would change in your own training if that were compulsory?

03 A mission hospital became a national institution. What did it have to give up to do that?

WHAT WE RUN

Academic programs

Business, leadership, entrepreneurship, healthcare, technology, sustainability and culture. Immersions of 12 to 15 days built around one of them.

Faculty and dean cohorts

Site-based curriculum development with Indian universities, industry and state agencies.

Executive programs

Company visits, policy briefings and operator conversations, tailored to a sector.

Service learning programs

Working visits with non-profits, social enterprises and CSR partners, tailored to your group.

READS WELL WITH: CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK

19 The Health System

11 Pharmacy of the World

SOURCES Christian Medical College Vellore: founded 1900 by Dr Ida S. Scudder; 2,873 beds; about 8,000 outpatients and 2,000 inpatients daily; 100 MBBS places a year; eleven hospital sites, with RUHSA and CHAD as the rural units.