

**Christian Medical College, Vellore
receives five Skoch awards for innovations and improvements in
patient care and community services**



The Christian Medical College, Vellore received ‘Order of Merit’ awards for five different programmes, one of which also won a Gold Award, at the Skoch Swasth Bharat Awards 2017, held in New Delhi on the 17th and 18th of March. The Skoch Foundation Awards have become one of the most respected and authoritative award programmes in India.

1. Preventive Health Care

Dr Rita Isaac, head of the Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs (RUHSA Department) presented ‘A Model Preventive Cervical Cancer Screen and Treatment Program for Rural India: Translating Evidence into practice in low resource settings’, based on the experience gained at RUHSA. Cervical cancer kills more women in India than breast cancer, and can usually be cured if discovered at an early stage. The screening technique is reliable and cost effective, but there were many social and practical

challenges to overcome, and the RUHSA experience will prove invaluable to others seeking to implement similar programmes.

2. Customer service improvement

Dr Raji Thomas, Head of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation showed how the annual “Rehab Mela” addresses the difficulties of providing regular and effective follow-up care to people with spinal cord injury, following their intensive rehabilitation programme at the Rehab Institute in Bagayam. In the context of a weekend of entertainment, sports and social interaction, it offers enormous savings in time and money for the “rehab graduates”.

3. Primary Care Innovation

CMC’s Dental Department has run outreach clinics in the community for several years, but recently were able to upgrade significantly the facilities and services available at the Low Cost Effective Care Unit at the Schell Hospital. Normally, in outreach clinics, the only treatment offered is extraction, but Dr. Rabin Chacko, head of Dental Unit I, demonstrated how this programme has allowed advanced procedures to be carried out at nominal cost to the economically deprived patients, in a much more convenient location for them. This required only a modest subsidy from the main department, which was more than compensated for by the much greater opportunities it had given for younger dentists to develop experience and skills.

4. Improving care with technology

Medical technology often receives bad press because it usually drives up the cost of health care, making more advanced treatment unaffordable for most people in India. CMC’s Neonatology Department has developed a way of saving the lives of babies who suffer from asphyxia at the time of birth, at a fraction of the cost of commercially available equipment. Dr. Santhanam Sridhar, head of Neonatology, presented “the Technology behind the MIRACRADLE!” – which uses phase change materials to cool the babies. This greatly improves survival rates and reduces the long term

complications associated with asphyxia at birth. |

5. Patient Safety



The tragedies of maternal and infant mortality provoked CMC's founder, Ida Scudder, to train as a doctor and come to serve the people of India. Safe deliveries remain the highest priority of CMC's Obstetrics Department, with over 40 babies born every day. Despite an ever-increasing work load, and complex referrals coming from other hospitals, the perinatal mortality rate has come down steadily over the past seven years, and the rate of asphyxia requiring ICU admission fell from 0.6% in 2009 to 0.015% in 2016.

Dr Emily Ebenezer, Assistant Professor in Obstetrics, explained how this has been achieved with minimal increase in per patient expenditure through the 'Intrapartum Initiative'. This nomination received the Skoch Gold Award

All these projects and programmes are 'low tech' and required little infrastructure or equipment. Each one has unique and innovatory features and places the patient firmly at the centre. They have all been delivered at minimal or zero cost to the patient and to the institution, while giving very significant

and diverse benefits.

Moreover, each of them can easily be replicated in other hospitals and so, these benefits can be multiplied across India. The infant cooling technology has been assigned to a commercial entity that is supplying it under the name MIRACRADLE! to many other tertiary level hospitals in India, and beginning to market it abroad.