Fellow of the Royal Society and CMC Researcher, Dr. Gagandeep Kang Shines Spotlight on High Quality Research Conducted in India

On April 16, Dr. Gagandeep “Cherry” Kang (Batch of ’81) became a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, a 360-year-old institution that awards eminent scientists for their exceptional contributions to science – she is the first woman from India to receive this extraordinary distinction. Dr. Kang has been recognized for her pioneering inter-disciplinary research on the development, transmission, and prevention of enteric infections among children, one outcome of which was the development of two indigenous vaccines against rotavirus. Today, the use of these two vaccines is helping save the lives of tens of thousands of children in India every year – and these vaccines have just become available through UNICEF to the world.

Dr. Kang’s recognition as a Fellow of the Royal Society of London not only brings attention to women’s contribution to science, but also highlights the importance of public health research in India and reaffirms CMC’s commitment to excellence in education, health, and research.

When asked about her newly conferred honor, Dr. Kang shared these thoughts, “Quite frankly, when I look at other medical institutions in India, I marvel that I have had the good fortune to wind up at CMC. CMC created the environment and opportunities for the kind of research I do. During my medical training, the community-orientation programs, with their exposure to the real world in India set the base for thinking about communities and prevention and not just about individual patients.” Dr. Kang’s medical path was driven by the desire to affect change within the communities that need it the most.

After her post-graduation in microbiology from CMC in 1991, Dr. Kang joined the Wellcome Trust Research Laboratory at the same institution, where she found the time and freedom to pursue her interests in enteric infections. She became one of the three Core Research Professors who receive full salary support from CMC with no commitments other than research.

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of CMC Vellore and the Foundation,

I recently attended a church service, where the celebrant, while speaking to a group of early teenage men and women, dared each of them to gather up the courage to be different. His message was “to lead with your heart”, thereby allowing your decisions to be made from the vantage point of love. It was a powerful message and one that brought to mind two individuals with whom we are all familiar – Dr. Ida Sophia Scudder and Dr. Honorine Ward.

120 years ago, the decisions made by CMC founder, Ida Scudder, came from a place of love and affection, resulting in a world that is today populated by thousands of men and women whose commitment to the compassionate care of others is undeniable and immeasurable. Ida’s dedication to excellence in healthcare, education, and research has remained the cornerstone of CMC’s existence, and her guiding words (from the gospel of St. Mark), “Not to be ministered unto but to minister”, are ingrained into the professional behavior of every CMC graduate.

A living testimony to Ida Scudder’s courageousness and willingness to “dare to be different”, is seamlessly recognized in the beliefs and actions of Dr. Honorine Ward. During the period of time that Honorine and I have worked together, I have observed in her medical practice and in her role as Chairperson of the Vellore CMC Foundation that her decisions – made on a daily basis – come from a place of genuine compassion and concern for others. Honorine possesses the innate ability to comfortably and effectively “lead with her heart”.

For this reason, I would like to take pause and share with Honorine the collective appreciation of our board members, donors, staff and friends for her extraordinary commitment and contributions to CMC in its entirety.

In this summer edition of Voices of Vellore, we pay tribute to two very notable CMC alumni – Dr. Gagandeep “Cherry” Kang ('81) and Dr. Ashok Dyalchand ('65); share the results of a campaign sponsored by Dr. Robert Fish to help support CMC’s Low-Cost Effective Care Unit (LCECU); and introduce the mission work of two other CMC alumni, Drs. Anil and Shalini Cherian ('83).

As in the past, I hope you find this edition of Voices of Vellore both informative and enjoyable!

With my warmest regards,

John A. Riehl
Dr. Kang decided to focus her studies on rotavirus, a virus that causes gastroenteritis among children and that, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), killed over 450,000 children in 2008. She spent a year in the UK and then the US furthering her studies on rotavirus. She completed her post-doctoral fellowship with one of the world's leading experts on rotaviruses, Dr. Mary Estes, at Baylor College of Medicine in Texas. Upon her return to India, Dr. Kang set up field studies on a scale that has never been done before to properly understand rotavirus infections in children.

Dr. Kang and her multi-disciplinary team studied issues specific to Indian children and designed complementary studies on water safety, vaccine trials, evaluation of vaccine efficacy and strategies to prevent the spread of diarrheal disease. One of the results of this work was the indigenous oral ROTAVAC® vaccine, a collaborative effort by multiple organizations, where Kang played a pivotal role. The vaccine licensed in 2014 is now beginning to be used beyond India by middle and lower-income countries to combat diarrheal disease.

Dr. Kang acknowledges the barriers to effective research in India, noting that there is insufficient investment to broadly achieve international research quality standards. However, for Dr. Kang the Fellowship of the Royal Society is such an honor because it recognizes the high quality of the clinical and public research conducted at CMC.

In an interview with India's online news channel, News18 (an affiliate of CNN International) Dr. Kang commented that, “she was delighted that her research – designed and done in India – has been recognized. As a medical researcher trained in India at the Christian Medical College in Vellore, she believes that her training and ability is second to none.”

Currently on sabbatical from Christian Medical College (CMC), Dr. Kang is serving as the Executive Director of the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI) in Faridabad, India and driving its mission of using science to support a healthy society. She is also the only Indian woman to be elected to the American Academy of Microbiology.
Dr. Fish-Sponsored LCECU Matching Gift Campaign Exceeds Expectations!

THE LOW-COST EFFECTIVE CARE UNIT (LCECU) provides primary medical care for the neediest, without discrimination in Vellore, India. Dr. Robert Fish, a member of the Scudder family, and true to Scudder tradition, has been a loyal and consistent supporter of the LCECU. Last year, he initiated a new campaign to support the LCECU.

We are happy to announce the successful completion of the Dr. Robert Fish-sponsored matching gift campaign for the Low-Cost Effective Care Unit (LCECU)! In total, the initiative raised $134,650 in support of the LCECU, far exceeding our expectations! The incredible response to the matching gift campaign will serve to further the mission and ongoing activities of the Christian Medical College in Vellore, while also paying tribute to the late Dr. Ida Belle Scudder, aunt of Dr. Fish, who dedicated her life to serving the needs of the poor.

The LCECU consists of a small outpatient clinic and a 46-bed general practice facility on the campus of the former Schell Eye Hospital in Vellore City. As Dr. Sunil Abraham, Head of the LCECU explained in a recent interview, "having a base hospital is not enough, outreach work is important to empowering communities and making

"If we keep ourselves to the hospital, these stories would never come to light and these members of the community would be lost. That’s why we realize all the more that we need to have our hands and feet where people live."

- Dr. Sunil Abraham

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an impact. On a regular basis, LCECU encounters patients who are seeking critical care because they are unable to reach the hospital in a timely manner or are unable to afford proper care. Dr. Abraham recently saw a diabetic patient with extremely high levels of blood sugar. After referring her to a social worker, Dr. Abraham found out that this woman had been taking care of her husband, who had been in an accident. Consequently, she was unable to seek care for herself or cover the cost of her medications. “If we keep ourselves to the hospital, these stories would never come to light and these members of the community would be lost. That’s why we realize all the more that we need to have our hands and feet where people live” noted Dr. Abraham.

The funds raised through this campaign will be used to further LCECU’s mission of reaching out to, connecting with, and empowering the communities in most need. In addition to continuing to provide subsidized care and a holistic health care outreach program, LCECU plans to establish The John Scudder Memorial Center for Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC), which will provide a space for learning, collaboration, and research on COPC.

We offer our most sincere thanks and appreciation to Dr. Robert Fish for initiating this matching gift challenge in honor of his aunt, and to all the donors who responded to the challenge and gave so generously to this great cause. We look forward to keeping you updated on the incredible work being carried out by the LCECU!
SOUTH SUDAN is a land-locked country in East-Central Africa that recently gained independence. South Sudan has less than 100 doctors in a country of more than twelve million people. Their health worker/1000 population ratio is 5000, well below the 4.5 recognized as critical to meet the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, these health workers are inadequately trained, resulting in extremely poor health and socio-economic outcomes. Recommendations to train mid-level health workers to equip and build capacity within its health care institutions have yet to be acted upon.

South Sudan’s Ministry of Health extended an invitation to Drs. Anil and Shalini Cherian (Batch of ’83) to serve as Director and Principal respectively of Jonglei Health Sciences Institute (JHSI) to meet the pressing need to train health care professionals. Previously, Drs. Anil and Shalini had worked in South Sudan, but were forced to leave due to the life-threatening conflicts in the region. The Cherians are answering the call, but need our help.

The JHSI will offer two courses in 2019 – one in Clinical Medicine and Public Health (Clinical Officers) and the other in Registered Midwifery. Upon completion, each student will receive a diploma and pass a qualifying National Health Professionals Examination. Enrolled students spend two to four weeks in local villages, and deliver community based programs. In addition, the students have integrated rural placements in primary health centers and satellite county hospitals to expose them to the realities of health service delivery in rural settings. Each student will be required to also undertake community-based projects and research during the course of the three-year program.

In the fourth quarter of 2018, Drs. Cherian approached CMC Vellore to request support for their humanitarian endeavors in South Sudan. CMC saw in this call, a global extension of Ida Scudder’s mission. The Cherians’ request received unanimous endorsement from the Executive Committee and CMC Council members at their bi-annual meeting in January 2019, which included the funds required to support all aspects of the two courses being offered.

The Cherians must however, find additional funds to cover their living expenses for the three year period that they intend to stay in South Sudan. In response, the Foundation has invited Anil and Shalini to present at its Annual Corporate meeting scheduled for June 26th, 2019. The Cherians will also attend the 2019 GOTC event in Alexander, VA as special guests to share their experiences with their fellow alumni.

We look forward to welcoming Anil & Shalini to New York when they join us for our June event.
ON APRIL 11TH, key members of the leadership teams of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), the Scudder Association Foundation and the Vellore CMC Foundation came together at RCA’s world headquarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan to explore new ways to blend our organizations’ resources for the benefit and health care needs of the poor in India and to give new meaning to a legacy that was started 200 years ago. The timing could not have been better!

In June of 1819, RCA sponsored its first American medical missionary, Reverend Doctor John Scudder Sr., the grandfather of CMC’s beloved founder, Dr. Ida Sophia. RCA remains loyal to and supportive of the Scudder family’s medical missionary work which included the first three generations and beyond. Most recently, RCA provided the financial resources needed by fifth-generation Scudder, Mr. Lew Scudder, to support his missionary work in Cyprus until the time of his death in November 2018.

The Scudder Association Foundation (SAF) too provides financial support and assistance to Scudder family-founded medical missions in the cities of Ranipet and Vellore, India. Encouraging the spirit of service, SAF funds scholarships for young men and women seeking careers in medicine, social services, and spiritual guidance.

Present at these milestone discussions were two RCA officials, Scott Engelsman and Reverend JP Sundararajan. The SAF was represented by Dr. James Taylor, a member of the Scudder family, First Vice President of the SAF and a Board member of the Vellore CMC Foundation. John Riehl, the Executive Director of the CMC Foundation represented the Foundation. At the conclusion of a day filled with meaningful idea exchange, it was enthusiastically established that by working together the three organizations could more significantly and positively impact the health and well-being of the people of South India.

The leadership of the Christian Medical College & Hospital in Vellore is excited with the reunited partnership of these three organizations as we prepare to write a new chapter in the compelling story of the RCA/Scudder Family “Legacy of Giving”.

“Working more closely with RCA and the Vellore CMC Foundation will ensure our donations achieve their intended purposes at the targeted institutions.”

– Jim Taylor, MD
UPCOMING EVENT REMINDERS!

Ecumenical Leadership Forum
June 25, 2019 | New York, NY

Stakeholders’ Roundtable Luncheon
June 25, 2019 | New York, NY

Traumatic Brain Injury Symposium
June 25, 2019 | New York, NY

Vellore CMC Foundation Annual Meeting
June 26, 2019 | New York, NY
We look forward to welcoming special guest, Dr. Deepak Abraham from CMC Vellore and GOTC keynote speakers, Drs. Anil and Shalini Cherian (’83), to this year’s Annual Meeting.

GOTC Alumni Reunion
June 27-29, 2019 | Washington, D.C.
Guest Speakers: Drs. Anil and Shalini Cherian (’83)

Inaugural CMC College of Nursing Scientific Session
June 28, 2019 | Washington, D.C.
Keynote Speaker, Dr. Selva Titus, Immediate Past Dean, CON

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