
Getting involved with International Health Projects: a personal perspective

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How did it start for me?

- Interested in how health care is delivered elsewhere in the world
- We tend to be very technology-based in North America but what do you do when resources are limited
- Medical school elective in 1988
 - Nakuru, Kenya
 - Provincial government hospital
 - Limited resources but incredible dedication, work ethic, desire to improve and get best results for patients

What happened next?

- Got busy
- Residency
- Family
- Limited time
- But there was still an interest to do something!

Others' experiences

- Met people who worked for MSF
- Learned about volunteer possibilities
- Got a better appreciation of health care in the developing world
 - Health education and prevention are more useful than “21st century technology”

First steps

- Sponsored children through Plan International
- Learned about how easy it is to support NGOs that deal with health issues
- Did some research online
- Read “Three Cups of Tea” (Greg Mortensen)
- Decided that I wanted to do a bit more

Examples of projects started

- Plan International/Plan India project to change state legislation to mandate children's rights (including health rights) in Uttarakhand
- HIV education program for Uttarakhand
- School renovations project in Lesotho, Africa

A cancer specific project

- ASTRO 2008 Boston
- IACA sets up booth at ASTRO meeting
- Information booth located at one end of exhibit hall
- Chance meeting and invitation to dinner meeting sponsored by IACA
- Dinner presentation on work being done including palliative care projects and learned about the Association of Radiation Oncologists of India (AROI)

How did it start for me?



Indo-American Cancer Association @ ASTRO (Boston, 2008)



We were honored to have some original IACC members
Dr Chitti Moorthy and Dr Dattatreyudu Nori both from New York join us. Left to right: Chitti Moorthy, Kirti Jain, Shelley Hukku, Shikha Halder and Dattatreyudu Nori



Our attendees being attentive to Dr Kirti Jain's introductions

What did I find?

- Physicians truly interested in helping those that are less fortunate
- An incredible opportunity to meet like-minded people
- Becoming aware of how much work has been done by IACA already
- Realizing that helping out much easier than I thought since organizational structure already exists



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Examples of current programs supported by IACA



Current Centers Supported by IACA

Cachar Cancer Centre, Silchar, Assam, India

Cancer Centre Welfare Home and Research Institute,
Thakurpukur, Kolkata, West Bengal

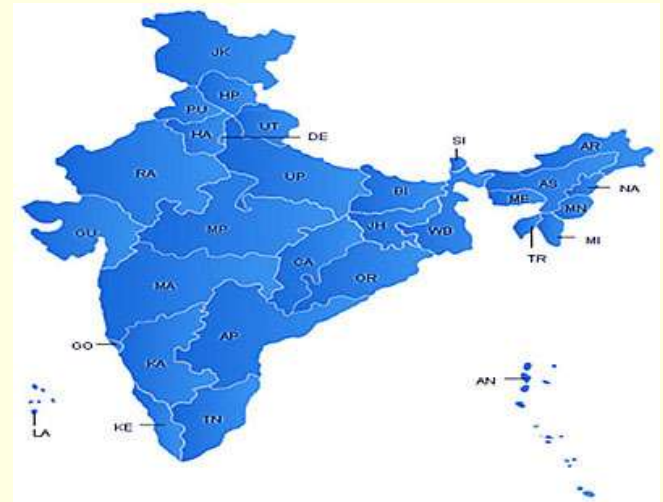
Rishikesh Clinic in conjunction with Ganga Prem Hospice,
Rishikesh, Uttarakhand

Bhagwan Mahaveer Cancer Hospital and Research Centre,
Jaipur, Rajasthan

Hakim Sanaullah Specialist Hospital and Cancer Center,
Sopore, Kashmir, India

Jabalpur Hospital in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India

Traveling Fellowship Program



What happened next?

- I started talking to people at IACA about possible opportunities/projects
- Searched by various means to see if there were areas in particular need
- Realized that state of Uttarakhand had very little organized palliative care
- Got my family involved
- Received a clipping about the future opening of the Ganga Prem Hospice

Ganga Prem Hospice

<http://www.gangapremhospice.org/>

Ganga Prem Hospice is a spiritually orientated, non-profit hospice for terminally ill cancer patients. The Hospice will provide medical, social, emotional and spiritual support for individuals and their loved ones as they face life threatening cancer and in their ongoing grief



How did I do my research?

- Reviewed Ganga Prem Hospice website
- Looked into credentials of its leading proponent and medical director (Dr. Ajay Dewan, surgical oncologist at RGCI)
- Contacted IACA/AROI colleagues as well
- Contacted Ganga Prem Hospice and started correspondence and information gathering process

More research!

Ganga Prem Hospice services in Uttarakhand

- 1. The monthly cancer clinic in Rishikesh**
- 2. Periodical cancer clinics in other cities**
- 2. The home care programme**
- 3. Bereavement support**



What did the IACA do?

- More research
- Dr. Vinay Jain met with Dr. Dewan and his staff in New Delhi
- Discussions started on how to help the Ganga Prem Hospice
- The IACA linked them with Pallium India (Dr. Rajagopal's palliative care program)



Linking like-minded people!

Palliative care expert visits GPH

Dr C Mohan, senior administrator at the Trivendrum Institute of Palliative Sciences, Kerala, visited Ganga Prem Hospice and joined in with the home care programme and clinics in June 2011.



What else could we do?

- More discussions occurred and more ideas started to flow
- A visiting palliative home care program headed by a nurse specialist was suggested
- Proposal, training and budget for such a position was reviewed
- Funding request was made to IACA

What happened next?

- Search for a qualified nurse took place
- Interviews were carried out
- An excellent candidate was chosen
- She underwent further training
- She started working and has become a tremendous asset to the Ganga Prem Hospice team!

Palliative care home nursing visits



Mrs Sicily Kutti Sebastion



What is happening?

- IACA and the Ganga Prem Hospice have a signed agreement
- A summary of workload is submitted
- Ongoing feedback and communication occurs
- More opportunities are being investigated including expanding the program
- This summer a physician (Dr. Saxena) was recruited to do palliative care in the region and is currently receiving additional training

Future Plans!



Future Possibilities

- Develop Ganga Prem Hospice into a center of excellence (clinical, teaching, research, advocacy, etc.)
- Use it to promote palliative care programs throughout the region
- Advocate for oncology and palliative care in the Uttarakhand
- Highlight value of this type of program to the various levels of governments

Small contributions go a long way!

- A very modest donation was made and was adequate for three years funding
- This has a snowball effect and can lead to great changes in the future
- It really highlights the importance of teamwork and collaboration among like-minded individuals
- The satisfaction in helping programs like this is truly immense

Teamwork is key!

- Motivated and keen individuals are needed
- But teamwork is the crucial element necessary for success
- There are many people on this team including (to name just a few):
 - Ms. Jennifer Quintanilla
 - Dr. Vinay Jain
 - Dr. Kirti Jain
 - Ms. Pooja Dogra
 - Dr. Ajay Dewan
 - Ms. Hollie Hongosh



Lessons that I have learned

- Every one of you here can make a contribution in some way
- Many people want to help and can help but they just don't know how
- A huge time commitment is not necessary
- A huge financial commitment is not needed
- The desire to help is essential
- The willingness to get involved is the first step
- There are great humanitarian organizations doing incredible work throughout the world

Are **you** interested in getting involved?

