



### IN COMMEMORATION OF DR. MUTHULAKSHMI REDDY'S 137TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY ( JULY 1886 – JULY 1968 )

#### A LEGEND UNTO HERSELF!



*Dr. Muthulakshmi hailed from a socially handicapped environment in an era when girls were born only to be married. Born in 1886 in the small princely state of Pudukottai, she faced numerous challenges. At thirteen she says " I had set my heart upon something high and I wanted to be a different woman from the common lot". It was not just destiny, but her indomitable spirit and courage that defied the odds, she had to struggle against an environment that was not just unfavorable, but also hostile.*

*She said "when father one day suggested to me that I would get a good salary as the headmistress of a local school, and that I might be satisfied with what little education I had,*

*I ran to the well in the garden to put an end to my life.*

*No offer of diamonds, no silk and money could tempt me away from my cherished desire"*

She passed the matriculation examination (having been educated at home) as a private candidate and qualified for college admission, which was the news of the day in Pudukottai town. She became the first woman medical graduate of Madras University, the first woman medical graduate in India in 1912 and in time, the first Indian woman member of a Legislative Council in 1927. She was a pioneer in the fight for social and political upliftment of women in India, an inspirational force for generations of helpless women and children. Her achievements as a legislator and social reformer had an everlasting impact on the lives of women.

### As a Legislator

Her work in the Legislative Council between 1927 and 1930 was very fruitful. She was able to pilot into laws many acts of social reform dear to her heart. The legislation to abolish the iniquitous devadasi system faced stiff resistance from the Congress lobby led by Satyamurthi Iyer. The Immoral Traffic Control Act, the Act to Prevent Cruelty to Children, raising the age of consent of girls for marriage and many other acts of social reform were enacted into laws during this period, entirely due to her efforts.

It was her passionate conviction that no woman, rich or poor, should remain uneducated. She was referred to as the great saint 'Avvai', who taught that men and women might go without food but never without education. As a tribute to the services of Dr. Reddy to the welfare of women, the government of Tamil Nadu has instituted the 'Dr. Muthulakshmi Maternity Benefit Scheme' which provides financial benefit to pregnant women for improving their nutrition and health status. This scheme has been in force since the 10th Plan and continues to date.

### Two Living Tributes

The living tributes to her memory are

- The **Avvai Home**, Orphanage and Schools Founded in 1930, this is the first home for destitute women and orphan children without any class barriers
- The **Cancer Institute (WIA)**, the first specialized center for cancer treatment in south India, was founded in 1954, the second such after the Tata Memorial in Bombay sponsored by the giant financiers.



### Avvai Home

Birth of the Avvai Home - Orphanage and Schools In 1930, the only shelter for Hindu girls, were two hostels in what was then Madras—one for Brahmin and the other for non-Brahmin women, an unacceptable divide. Dr. Reddy's abolition of the devadasi system, liberated women from the pernicious shackles of dedication at temples. One evening, somewhere in June of 1930, three young girls arrived at her house, seeking protection. They had nowhere to go; their relatives would not take them in. Dr. Reddy referred them to the correspondent of the hostels, of which Dr. Reddy herself was the Medical Officer. They were subjected to the worst verbal abuse and returned the same night to Dr. Reddy, traumatized and weeping. This was indeed an emergency and needed an immediate decision. The girls had sought asylum and protection to lead a normal life.

Dr. Reddy not only accepted the challenge but demonstrated her total commitment to the cause of women. The Avvai Home was born in her own residence. One of the girls later became a teacher, another a doctor and the third a staff nurse. Avvai Home moved to a rented building in Mylapore and in 1936 shifted to Adyar where it continues to function today.

Although it was initially set up for the protection and education of the liberated girls of the devadasi community, the Avvai Home transformed into a refuge for all women and children who sought protection and education: young widows who refused immolation, deserted wives with their little children who had nowhere to go, orphaned destitute girls, deserted babies and unwed mothers.

In tune with Mahatma Gandhi's program of basic education, the Avvai Home later grew to be a large educational unit, catering to the most underprivileged. The basic education school at Avvai Home was established in 1950, marking the beginning of the Home's own educational complex. Innumerable women were trained as nurses or teachers till they were economically viable. The facility gradually evolved over the years in keeping with the changing paradigm of national education into pre-primary and primary school. In 1952, a Teacher's Training Institute was established under the aegis of the National Council of Teacher's Educational Research and Training (NCTERT) which awarded a diploma in teaching. In 1964, through a munificent donation from Mrs. Nallamuthu Ramamurthy (Dr. Reddy's sister and the first Indian Principal of Queen Mary's College), the TVR High School was established which was later upgraded to a Higher Secondary School in 1978.







## Cancer Institute (WIA)

The story of Dr. Reddy will be incomplete without tracing the history of her courage in establishing the Cancer Institute (WIA). It was as a young medical graduate that Dr. Reddy was witness to the agony, pain and ultimately the death of her sister as a result of a misdiagnosed case of rectal cancer. India was then under British rule, and there were no facilities for treatment of cancer at that time. The Cancer Institute (WIA) is the consummation of her dream born in the corridors of the Royal Marsden Hospital, London: to establish a cancer hospital where care would be provided irrespective of social or economic class. Here too she had to face the challenges of total public ignorance about cancer and governmental apathy. When she approached the Government of Tamil Nadu for land, the then Minister queried: 'Why a Cancer Hospital? People only die of cancer'. The administration in 1949 of the newly independent India exhibited a degree of ignorance and arrogant indifference that was amazing; all that the WIA received was a communication from the Health Secretary informing them that the government could not afford the new institute at the moment, and wished the WIA good luck, with grave doubts about the venture.

Dr. Reddy managed to convince the then Chief minister Mr. Rajaji and got a piece of land near the canal at Adyar. Thus was born the Cancer Institute (WIA) alive and vibrant founded in 1954, the third specialized cancer center in India after the Tata Memorial Hospital in Bombay and the Chittaranjan National Cancer Institute in Calcutta.

Dr. Reddy's contribution to the upliftment of women and children, especially the underprivileged, was duly recognized in 1947 with the raising of the first national flag at Red Fort which carried her name. When Dr. Reddy passed away in 1968, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, later Prime Minister of India, said on radio "Were it not for women like Dr. Reddy and Dr. Sarojini Naidu, we would not be occupying the high positions that we do today". The world bowed in homage at the passing of this great noble woman who, born to a tradition of ignorance, prejudice and degradation, rose like a sun out of the sea of squalor to light up the souls and bodies of generations of helpless women.

*(Excerpts from the Lecture delivered by Padma Vibhushan, Magsaysay awardee late Dr. V. Shanta, Chairman, Cancer Institute(WIA) at the India International Centre on 16th March 2012)*

~Om Shanti Shanti Shanti~

## MEMORIES OF MY GRANDMOTHER!



By Dr. Krishnamurthi  
Sundaram, MD, FACS.  
Clinical Professor, Dept. of  
Otolaryngology, NY, US

I was fortunate to be delivered by my grandmother, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy at her home in Adyar. My grandparents had constructed their home called "SANTI" on Besant Avenue, Adyar and they lived as a joint family with my parents, Dr. S. Krishnamurthi and his wife, Mrs. Mandakini Krishnamurthi. My grandmother who was an OB-GYN delivered me at home and my mother had an uneventful delivery. My maternal grand aunt who was also an OB GYN in Nagpur went around distributing sweets to all her friends and relatives. My grandmother was very affectionate towards children and loved to talk to my sister, Dr. Chandralekha Rajendra and me. As she grew older her vision was affected and she would ask me or my sister to read the newspaper to her every morning. She was very interested in what was happening in India and the world. She also liked to listen to a comedy radio serial called "Dubash Veedu" about a joint family in Madras as it was called then. This serial was very funny but was later discontinued. Payasam was her favorite dessert.

She was the OB GYN for many Maharanis and received gifts from them for her service to them and their royal families in the pre-independence era.

Later, when Mr. Morarji Desai became the Deputy Prime Minister of India, he was appealing for donations to the National Defense Fund. She donated all these gifts to the National Defense Fund to help the nation.

My grandmother was my role model and inspiration. She was the reason I became a doctor. Around that time there was a lot of interest in aeronautical engineering and space programs. My grandmother explained that medicine was a noble profession, and one could be of service to many patients. I followed her advice and joined Madras Medical College in 1966. She was pleased with my decision. She became ill and passed away in 1968. I felt I lost a very close friend and loving grandmother when she died. We used to see a lot of famous people visiting my grandmother between 1956 and 1968 : politicians, Presidents, Prime Ministers, social reformers, actors, doctors, swamis, teachers, writers and many more. I was introduced to many of them and heard about their achievements. This was very inspiring to me as I was growing up.

As small children my friends and I used to play cricket in front of our house. My grandmother used to call us into the house after the game and talk to all the children one by one enquiring about their family and interests and would distribute eatables. She enjoyed interacting with children as she felt that they were the future of the country.

When anyone expressed disappointment that they did not have a son, she would encourage them saying "We are all women who are contributing to society. Support and appreciate your daughters in what they aspire to achieve."

**She was fearless and expressed her views for the greater good. She will remain an inspiration for generations to come.**



Dr A.V.Lakshmanan  
Retd. Director (Admn) and Advisor I I,  
Cancer Institute( W.I.A.),

Dr. Mrs. Muthulakshmi Reddy ( July 1886– July 1968 ) was one of the most courageous woman I have come across in my life. I joined the Institute in August 1958 and hence I had known her for a brief period of ten years only. She used to come to the Institute for participating in functions held for inauguration of new buildings. Once she had come to see the Research Division which consisted of four non medical departments like Biochemistry, Physics, Isotopes and Tissue Culture distributed over a total area of 4500 sq.ft. She used to emphasize only a single message to all of us namely that all of you engaged in research should join together and find a medicine to cure cancer as soon as possible. Though quite elderly in the 1960s

I could discern a determination and utmost firmness in her voice whenever she talked about finding a cure for this disease. I later on came to know from our late Adviser Dr. S. Krishnamurthi that her sister's suffering from rectal cancer had left an indelible impression on his mother. In fact this sad episode was the main reason for her establishing the Cancer Institute against very heavy odds in the year 1952 .

I consider myself fortunate to have known Mother as she is familiarly addressed. Both the institutions founded by her namely the Avvai Home for girls and the Cancer Institute will forever echo her greatness and hard selfless work throughout her life .



As a faculty member of the Institute, I reflect on the stories of this resilient and indomitable change maker in the field of oncology in India. Through her learning, as the first woman legislator of the erstwhile Madras Presidency and as the Founder of the Avvai Home, Dr. Reddy built up a wealth of interdisciplinary knowledge that played an important role in the establishment of the Cancer Institute along with the Women's Indian Association (WIA). Dr. Reddy was the first secretary of the WIA and later became its Life President.

Dr. Reddy made several appeals to set up a specialized cancer center in the city of Madras. Among the several appeals, the most noteworthy was an appeal made to the members of the King George V Memorial Fund Committee in 1935 driven by her on behalf of several Women's Associations in the city of Madras, including the WIA, the Madras Presidency Muslim Ladies' Association, Sri Sarada Ladies' Union, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the Madras branch of the All-India Women's Conference. Dr. Reddy always regarded the value of collaboration across disciplines to help achieve her goals and dreams. Through these appeals, Dr. Reddy expressed the importance of setting up a specialized cancer center equipped with modern infrastructure to establish training and research activities for the prevention and treatment of cancer. Along with the WIA, Dr. Reddy was able to setup the Women's Indian Association Cancer Relief Fund; her untiring efforts in making appeals continued to be presented to relevant Ministries in power until the hospital was first setup in 1954. Dr. Reddy helped set up several social welfare programs, especially for women and children. With every task that Dr. Reddy undertook, she took another step towards a future that would be free of the fallacies and inefficiencies she encountered constantly.

The Institute was built on the tenets of research, education with an emphasis on public health and, most importantly, advocacy. Dr. Reddy's steadfastness, discipline, integrity, and selfless service to humanity helped her achieve so much for the greater good of society and humanity.

After setting up the Institute, Dr. Reddy continued to address several socioeconomic issues in the State and, therefore, was never confined within the four walls of any structure or organization.

## 2nd MEMORIAL ORATION OF BELOVED CHAIRMAN, PADMA VIBUSHAN LATE DR. V. SHANTA



### HER MANTRA

**~When the sick approach the gates of the Institute, weak in body and spirit, full of fear, there is only one response; you have to become a part of them~.**

**DR. V. SHANTA 1927 - 2021**

The 2nd Memorial Oration of beloved Chairman, Padma Vibhushan late Dr. V. Shanta was held on 11th March, 2023.

Mr. N. Ram, Director, The Hindu Publishing Group delivered the oration on "Cancer and the Role and Responsibilities of the Media".

Dr. Shanta dedicated her life to patient care for over 6 decades and played a pioneering role in all the achievements of the Institute. She firmly believed that "Of all inequalities, inequalities in health care is the most inhuman" and redefined the Big "C" Commitment, Compassion, Comfort, Cure, Control & Care.

Mr. Ram spoke on 'Cancer and the Roles and Responsibilities of the Media'. He emphasized that journalists can provide credible public health information competently only by partnering with trustworthy healthcare providers committed to providing service to all sections of society, especially the weak and vulnerable. He added that the educational potential of the media still remains largely unrealized in India. The depiction of cancer in feature films as a death sentence, any concessions to the tobacco lobby, any inaccurate reports on cancer cure or control will immediately trigger a phone call from Shanta or a letter to the editor said Mr. Ram.



***The legend is no longer with us, but her legacy will remain an inspiration for all of us in the fight against cancer.***



### **GONE YET NOT FORGOTTEN!**

It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing away of Dr G Selvaluxmy, Director, Cancer Institute (WIA).

Dr. GSL, as she is fondly called attained the Lotus Feet of the Lord in the morning of 26th June 2023, leaving behind a void that cannot be filled.

Dr. Selvaluxmy was a cherished member of the Oncology Fraternity and was known for her patient dedication and her bold persona. She was deeply loved and respected by her patients, colleagues, friends and the extended Cancer Institute Family. She will always be remembered for her compassion and the countless lives she touched through her dedicated services to the Cancer Institute over three decades.

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My Association with Dr. Selvaluxmy spans over a period of 30 years. She was a very able administrator and a strict disciplinarian. Besides a very in-depth knowledge of the subject she always had the ultimate good of her sub-ordinates in mind in all her dealings. Even after becoming the Director of the Institute, she maintained cordial relations with our department helping us out in all our problem areas. In her demise the institute has lost a great visionary- unmatched and irreplaceable- who had the good of the institute at heart and I have lost a dependable friend and Mentor.

Dr. Alexander John  
HOD & Professor  
Department of Radiation Oncology



# MILESTONES ACHIEVED

## DEPARTMENT OF MOLECULAR ONCOLOGY :



A patent has been granted for Cancer Institute titled “NOVEL CELL PENETRATING ANTI TUMORIGENIC POLYPEPTIDE (CIEWS-PEP) FOR POTENTIAL THERAPEUTIC APPLICATION IN TREATMENT OF EWING'S SARCOMA” Patent No: 429709. The above-mentioned application for the term of 20 years from the

28th day of January 2015 in accordance with the provisions of the Patents Act, 1970. The invention CI-EWS-PEP is a peptide which has unique cell penetrating and nuclear localization capabilities to enter Ewing's Sarcoma cells and inhibit Ewing's sarcoma protein EWS-FLI1 activity. The peptide is 49 amino acids long comprising of 30 amino acids from the native EWS-FLI1 protein along with cell penetrating peptide sequence and nuclear localization signal sequence. The presence of cell penetrating peptide sequence and nuclear localization signal sequence confers high transduction efficiency and stable nuclear localization. The peptide has shown promising anti-cancer effects in Ewing's sarcoma cells. Future studies will involve development of peptide-nanoparticle, peptide-drug conjugate formulations aimed at increasing the stability and efficacy of the peptide and targeted delivery to Ewing's sarcoma cells.

## IMSOS 2023

The 9th Annual Conference of the Indian Musculoskeletal Oncology Society was held at The Hilton in March by the Musculoskeletal Oncology group of Cancer Institute (WIA). At IMSOS 2023 we aimed to break the barriers between patients and their better outcomes by bridging science and practice and bringing evidence to bedside in our Operating rooms and Clinics. The theme of the conference was “Integrating care to improve outcomes”. The conference was inaugurated by Member of Parliament, South Chennai, Dr. Thamizhachi Thangapandian. The conference witnessed over 700 participants including 5 stellar international faculty. There was a sarcoma survivors meet and also a sarcoma awareness run, in which around 1000 people participated.

## FELLOWSHIP IN ONCO-ANESTHESIA AS SUPER SPECIALITY- CANCER INSTITUTE(WIA) BECOMES A PIONEER IN TAMILNADU!!

Understanding and recognizing onco-anesthesia as a divergent specialty has been on an increasing trend globally in recent years. The year 2023 marks another milestone for the Department of Anesthesiology, Pain and Palliative care, with the establishment of a “2-year fellowship course in Onco-Anesthesia the first in the state of Tamil Nadu. At the national level, Cancer Institute (WIA) stands proudly as one among nine institutes to offer this course. The experience and knowledge gained by the faculty from anesthetizing diverse patient population with distinctive disease presentations, (an attribute of the institute) in both operating and non-operating room setups had been pivotal in helping the department get recognized in its competency to shoulder such a course.

*“In learning you will teach and in teaching you will learn”- Phil Collins*

## D.M. ONCOPATHOLOGY

One of the major tasks for pathologists is to identify a tumor as malignant or non-malignant. However, unless a pathologist is aware of the subtle presentation of pre-cancerous conditions and undifferentiated/atypical cancers, there is a very high chance that it may be overlooked. Hence histopathological reporting of a possible malignant tumor is best done by pathologists with experience in oncopathology. Moreover, a molecular revolution has swept the field of diagnostic oncopathology with the current gold standard being complete morpho-molecular characterization of tumors with classification based on molecular genetic aberrations. Tumor heterogeneity, tumor evolution during treatment and post treatment changes has strategically placed oncopathologists as the most appropriate personnel to interpret and report advanced molecular oncopathological tests. To meet this unmet demand of highly trained oncopathologists, the National Medical Commission had appropriately decided to start 3 year D.M. Oncopathology and elevate it to a superspecialty. D.M. Oncopathology was started at the Institute last year, to train the post graduates not only in basic techniques of conventional pathology but also in advance molecular testing modalities and empower them to perform, supervise and correlate various modalities of oncopathology tests.

This comprehensive three years training in D.M. Oncopathology will empower the oncopathologists to perform, supervise and correlate various modalities of oncopathology tests and give a comprehensive, contemporary morpho-molecular diagnosis.

## “International Day of Immunology” 29th April 2023



The Department of Molecular Oncology, celebrated the International Day of Immunology, under the aegis of the Indian Immunology Society, to bring awareness about ongoing research in the field of Immunology to the general public. Dr. Rameshwar, Founder and Managing Director of Bioklone Biotech Private Limited, scientist and entrepreneur who has been a pioneer in custom antibody production, delivered a lecture on “Monoclonal antibodies in diagnosis and therapy”. Dr. Raman Muthusamy, Senior Research Professor at Centre for Infectious Diseases, Saveetha Dental College & Hospitals, explained the importance of the One health approach and the necessity of public participation in alerting health authorities to avert health risks like zoonotic diseases. The program ended with a quiz on Immunology for participating college students. All the participants were issued certificates and Winners of the quiz were awarded prizes. The organizers expressed their sincere thanks to the IIS for their continued support for conducting this annual event.

## INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY

### OUR NURSES! OUR FUTURE!

International Nurses Day is celebrated annually on May 12th to commemorate the important role that nurses play in providing quality healthcare services to patients across the world.

A special event sponsored by our donors from Huron Consulting Group was conducted on the 11th of May. The event provided an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of nurses to cancer care, and to recognize the important role they played in improving patient outcomes and quality of life by providing crucial care and support to patients undergoing complex treatments and therapies.



## World No Tobacco Day – 31st May 2023

### CHENNAI

Cancer Institute (WIA) organized an awareness rally on ‘World No Tobacco Day- 2023’ under the theme “We Need Food, Not Tobacco” in Elliot’s Beach, Chennai, to spread awareness on the ill-effects of tobacco usage. The rally was flagged off by Mr. Ramani, Inspector of Police and pediatric cancer survivors around 400 people participated



### DINDIGUL

A workshop for tobacco cultivation was organized at Kedhairumbu community hall, Oddanchatiram, Dindigul.

Mr. Ravichandran, Deputy Director- Agriculture, Government of Tamil Nadu, inaugurated the workshop following which Dr. E. Somasundaram, Director - Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Coimbatore delivered a lecture on the importance of alternative crop cultivation.



### MADURAI

A walkathon was inaugurated by the Corporation Commissioner Mr. Simranjeet Singh Kahlon IAS. Students from dental colleges and HCL volunteers participated and helped in spreading awareness about the ill effects of tobacco.





A 3 months wig making training program for beedi rolling women was started in association with the Exodus Export Pvt. Ltd in April 2023. The program was inaugurated by the District Collector - Tirunelveli Dr. Karthikeyan along with the Sub Collector Mr. Gokul, and Assistant Director of skill development training Mr. Franklin.

### WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY



The institute's Department of Transfusion Medicine celebrated The World Blood Donor Day for the very first time on June 14, 2023. This program was headed by Dr. Kalpana Balakrishnan (Associate Director), Mrs. Varalakshmi (Associate Director-Admin) and Dr. Swaminathan (Associate Director). Our regular voluntary non-remunerated donors and Blood organizers were felicitated. Mementos and certificates of appreciation were distributed to the donors. This has made a positive impact on them and they appreciated that our institute has recognized their work for the noble cause.



### NON-STOP KITCHEN! Round the year since 1963!

CI Kitchen was started in 1963 in a 10 X 15 ft single room. Firewood was the fuel. Around 30 staffs and 65 patients, of which around 15 pediatric patients, were served food daily. Run with 2 Supervisors, 3 cooks and 4 helpers, it would open before day break, at 4.30 A.M and closes at 9.30 P.M, on all 365 days. Those days, Copper, Brass and Stainless-steel vessels were used for cooking. In 1986, the kitchen at Dr. VS campus was renovated and a new kitchen for Dr. SK campus was constructed.

Slowly LPG gas cylinders were introduced. In 1986, a Dietician was appointed for the first time. In 1986 food was prepared for around 150 patients at Dr. VS Campus & at Dr. SK Campus for around 65 patients.

At Dr SK campus alone except for about 25 Special ward patients, all patients were served food at no cost till today. Along with the special ward patients, Resident staffs (Doctors & nurses) are also served with food at subsidized cost. Since 1994, Industrial model Steam boilers and other facilities have been introduced. Usage of Fire wood was stopped.

In 2013, both kitchens were transformed to complete modular kitchens and in 2020 the kitchen was renamed as Department of Dietetics. Today at Dr. VS Campus around 250 to 270 patients are served. Patients are given therapeutic diet with high protein supplements, with utmost care and compassion. At Dr. SK Campus, around 150 Special ward patients and around 50 General ward patients use the facility. Whether paid or not, all patients are provided with same food of same quality. Dieticians go round every patient, prepare food chart, do initial assessment and provide Diet counselling.

Both kitchens have got FSSAI license and all required quality checks are performed. All staffs are vaccinated. Staffs are screened for hemoglobin, the presence of salmonella in their Stool, fungal infection of nail etc.

The quality of the food is daily assessed by the dietician and microbiology testing (both in house & outsourced) is done regularly. Some of the challenges we face on a generic note includes providing food as per protocol without any lapse especially on those days like heavy rain, during floods, Cyclone, lockdown periods and so on. Even on such situations we managed to provide milk everyday, thanks to Aavin who supplied regularly.

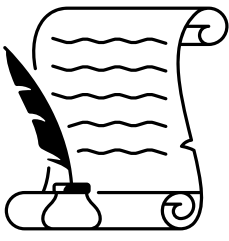
A few donors provided groceries and vegetables & kitchen staffs stayed day and night at kitchen for many days and ensured that everyone was fed with utmost care maintaining the same quality.

Per day consumption of groceries is roughly about 75 – 80 Kgs of rice, Pulses (40-45 Kgs), Tamarind, Chilli & other spices about 6 – 8 kgs, about 120 kgs of Vegetables for both campus kitchens together.

**One of our staff members said gleefully, “After all such hardships, when a patient feels good about our food that we serve and greets us happily, we get utmost satisfaction”.**

**-HARINI & ANITHA**





## STORIES THAT INSPIRE

### VEDHARAM'S INSPIRING STORY! - A Cancer Survivor's Testimony

"Everyone has their story to share! As life is the best teacher, it taught me so many lessons and it continues teaching me. From a Cancer survivor, I turned into a Chartered Accountant (CA),"

"I belong to a humble family background and was brought up in a village. When I was about 7 years old my monotonous life changed when I started feeling a sharp pain in my stomach which made me roll from one end of the floor to the other. At the hospital, they operated and cut 8 inches of my intestine and sent it for biopsy and the report tested positive for Cancer. I got admitted in Cancer Institute.

A Bone Marrow Biopsy was done and confirmed to be early stage of Non Hodgkin Lymphoma. I was advised to take two cycles of Chemotherapy. During chemotherapy, all my hair had fallen but my COURAGE was intact. I knew I had to build my own confidence. My immunity hit a low and I could not strain myself physically. I could not do the things others my age were doing. It was then that I took solace in books. I started to concentrate on activities involving mental work rather than physical. Books and journals became my friends. I did my schooling in a Government School in Tamil Medium.

Again, at the age of 12, I was affected by tuberculosis and was operated in my neck and underwent tough medication for 6 months. In spite of all this, I excelled in my studies. I got my education through my mother tongue Tamil. My dream was to study at IIT. But due to my health condition, I was not allowed to move to Chennai. I love math so I chose B.Sc., Mathematics instead of engineering even though I scored 93 % in 12th Grade. CA was introduced to me by one of my relatives.

Post my graduation in Mathematics. I pursued CA. (Chartered Accountancy), joined a mid-sized firm with the only expectation to become a Good Chartered Accountant.

I could not sit for more than 8 hours as it created a lot of physical strain on me. I cleared my CA in my 3rd attempt. This was a great day for me. I always wanted to start my own CA Firm and get into Practice so that's what I did after becoming a CA.

I had hesitation in marital life. However, after getting my doubts cleared from experts, I got married too. She is also a CA. My wife knows my complete medical history. Yet she didn't have a second thought of marrying a survivor. We are blessed with a baby girl. We are a happy family now. I always tend to help kids suffering from Cancer. Also, the real tough task is not winning the war against Cancer, it is the Post-Treatment Life with so many restrictions on food and activities that makes it tough.

The moral support always supplements the treatment and speedy recovery. The psychological support for survivors and the counselling post treatment can bring lot of positive changes in the survivor's life that will drive the survivor towards a happy and meaningful life. In that way I am very gifted as well to receive the support and I am happy that Cancer Institute is providing the psychological support for cancer survivors through After Completion Therapy Clinic.

To bring awareness that "Cancer is not the end of life, certainly there is a happy life after cancer" I share my journey in various forums.



இடியும் புயலும் முடிவல்ல  
மீண்டும் தென்றல் தவறும்  
காரிருள் இரவும் முடிவல்ல  
மீண்டும் விடியல் புலரும்  
இலையுதிர் காலம் முடிவல்ல  
மீண்டும் பூக்கள் மலரும்  
கலக்கம் என்பது முடிவல்ல  
மீண்டும் அமைதி நிலவும்  
காஞ்சர் என்பது முடிவல்ல...மீண்டும் வாழ்க்கை தொடரும்!



# THE INJECTION...

"I don't want the injection." announced Miss R as soon as I entered the pre-medication area of the surgical block. She looked at me pleadingly with half teary eyes. She was a 17 year old teenager, how do I convince her for anything let alone an injection. All the written informed consent and the explaining of the different options of anesthesia and the risks and benefits of each which I had meticulously been through with her the previous evening seemed to have been a pure academic exercise. She flatly refused anyone touching her. I saw my watch, it was 8:30 am. The operation theatre was getting disinfected so I had sometime to convince her for an intravenous cannula and an epidural injection in her spine for post operative pain relief. She had been through a lot in the last 4 years.

Diagnosed with cancer of the femur bone at the age of 13, it must have been traumatic for her. At an age when she was supposed to be going for movies and gossiping about boys, she had found herself making the rounds of chemotherapy wards. Wigs are not really the kind of accessories a young girl would fancy. Then a major surgery to take out a part of the bone which had the tumor and replace it with a metal prosthesis followed by a long painful rehabilitation period. Things seemed to have gotten better but then she landed up with a wound infection and now had come for a re-do prosthesis. She had a 100 injections, I couldn't blame her for not wanting anymore, I slowly found myself getting convinced by her rather than the other way round.

"No Nairita", I said to myself. "You have to do this, she needs the injections." When is your birthday darling?", I asked her. She said, "27th November". "So in 5 months you are going to be an adult?" She gave me a flashing smile.



"Phew! Finally I had got her attention. "Which means that you will be able to get a driving license and you will be able to vote.", I told her. The light sparkled in her eyes. "Do you know what else happens when you grow up? You become matured, you know what's good for you and you take the right decisions. This intravenous cannula is absolutely necessary for you so that we can give you the anesthetic and you can have your surgery and get better.", I'll make it as pain-free as possible, a little more than an ant bite. Then you can do your physiotherapy sessions easily and walk earlier. Don't you want that?" "Yes, yes I want to be able to walk, I have already missed one year of high school, next year I want to go to college.", she said eagerly. So finally she agreed to have both injections.

I slowly and cautiously put the smallest cannula that I could through her chemo -battered veins. I was about to scrub for the epidural when I got a call saying 'Home calling'.

Today I had a reason to pick up this call even at this juncture. "Ananya has a temperature of 102 degrees, you need to be here", said a half worried, half panicked father from the other side. Of course I need to be there. My daughter had a vaccination two days back and had a delayed fever at 3 am in the night. The Crocin and nasal drops did their magic then but naturally the fever decides to resurface while I'm at work. What is she doing?" I ask him. "She is playing with her toys.", he says. "Did she eat something?". "Yes she ate some pongal." Good. Both boxes ticked. "Ok then just give her 1.5 ml Crocin drops now. And tell Kalai akka to keep giving her water frequently. Even if she drinks just milk it's fine. She'll be ok." I say trying to reassure myself more than him perhaps.



"Are you sure?" He asks with some calm returning to his voice. "Yes I'm sure. Don't worry, Kalai akka will be able to take care, she has been well trained to handle such situations.

You go ahead with work. I'll see what I can do." I say. "First case started?" asks hubby dear. "Well, nooooo!!!!I'm trying to!" I say looking at the large wall clock in the premedication area. "Ok ok bye then." The first thing we working women must do to maintain our sanity is to get rid of the 'Mommy guilt'.

It does nothing but fog the brain. Let's be practical, establish strong systems and raise self sufficient kids.

Now coming back to Miss R. "Do I have to have the injection at the back, can't you give me something I.V?" In the two minutes that I had left the room to attend the phone call I had lost her attention. I tell her that of course we could give her I.V meds but they will not be enough to go through rigorous physiotherapy. She nods her head approvingly but not very happily. "She needs more distraction." I think as I scrub for the epidural procedure. "What do you want to be dear?" I enquire. "I want to be a scientist and do research." She says enthusiastically. "I'm just cleaning you back with some antiseptic solution. Ok so, you want to do research? What do you want to research about?" I inquisitively ask her. "I have a few ideas. Tell me something. My mother told me that soon a cancer drug is going to be discovered which will cure all cancers with just one shot. Is that true?" She asks me back. Trust a mother to install optimism in her cancer stricken child. "Positively.

Studies are going on all over the world to make that happen. Now R I'll be putting the small local anesthetic injection in your back. You keep talking. So what were you saying?" "You see these cancer cells need food to survive.

# ...STORY!

**Dr Nairita Das, Assistant Professor**  
**- Department of Anaesthesia**

"If we can somehow deprive them of that...." she rattles on. I insert a needle into a very critical space around the spinal cord called the epidural space, I lose track of what she is saying but I'm sure it's very interesting. Ok done, now I'm listening again though I totally missed the path breaking discovery she is going to make in the field of cancer. All that matters to me is that my epidural is over without a wince! How selfish! Now the dressing. But she is not yet done yet and continues, "The other idea I have is about the Corona virus. You know, how we all have our own weaknesses? I'm sure this virus too has some weakness and if we can make a spray to target it and install it at all public spaces it would be great. Of course it has to be safe for humans and other animals. " " Yes, why not? You know there's an organization called the Indian council of Medical Research. They give grants for young scientists like you. You can write up your proposal and send them." I say to encourage this brilliant mind. Then comes a shocker. "But my mother doesn't want me to take up science as a career. She wants me to study engineering or economics and take up a stable job. She wants me to become financially independent." There surfaces the practicality of a mother. She wants her daughter to be economically independent so that she is never a burden on anybody and can live life on her own terms. "She says that I have to stand for long periods of time if I do science and with my leg I won't be able to do that.

"She wants me to get a desk job. But I am really interested in science." I still see a spark in her disappointed eyes. Can we strike a balance between practicality and our dreams? Maybe we can, maybe we can't. But we have to try. " Why do you want to study science?" I ask her. " It's because then I can discover new things and find solutions to all the problems we face." Promptly she replies. "Do you know what engineering really is? It's just applied science. In fact engineering puts all that you learn in science into practice. See this monitor that you are connected to measuring your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen saturation. This is a piece of engineering, applied to medicine. If it were not for engineers we would still be living in caves, cooking on firewood and travelling on horse carts." I say sounding a bit dramatic. "So you mean to say that I can still be a scientist if I study engineering?", she asks almost in disbelief. " Yes darling you can. Ok now tell me, how was your injection?" I ask her triumphantly. " What it's over?"

After putting her to sleep I take a break and thanks to all the science, engineering and technology that has gone behind electromagnetic waves, mobile phones and whatsapp I am able to make a video call. My little one is trying to climb up the sofa and feed her dolly some play dough cookies. Her fever had settled. Our children sometimes have so much curiosity, so much creativity, so much eagerness and such brilliance. They only need that little bit of push, that little bit of confidence and a continuous dialogue from us. Let us kindle that spark in them so that humanity continues to excel. Let us give wings to their dreams. And let nothing come in their way, not even cancer.

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