

SIRUMALAI HEALTH CENTER

YEAR BOOK

MARCH 2023

FIRST
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION

IMPACT
NARRATIVES





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NOTES FROM CO-FOUNDER'S DESK

Woods are lovely, dark
and deep and we have
miles to go before we
sleep.....



Throughout history, Hope and Faith have been the driving force behind many organizations to begin anew. We have been no different. A couple with a modest medical degree and a decent training background. We aspire to identify a deserving community and have faith that the community believes in us and participates by making shared decisions for their health. The keystone of family medicine practice is this trust between doctor and patient, we aspired to build that.

Bringing such a dream to reality has been a tall and challenging task. It needed meticulous planning, meetings with stakeholders and beneficiaries, consistency and transparency in our day-to-day activities. The sustenance of this organization rests on some unique selling proposition. First being an apt location, the center is situated in the marketplace where villages confluence for daily errands. This, in turn, makes it easy to access for the people's health needs. Second is, people-centeredness. Having understood our target population and their medical conditions the activities of the clinic have been tailored accordingly. The third is, continuity of care. A person's healthcare does not cease once the patient leaves the clinic; hence, the staff performs recall checks on patients, reminds them of review dates and offers continued medical support. Fourth, being ethically sound, in the day and age of quick and instant gratification, we have had to fight daily to keep our medical practice ethical & appropriate. Fifth and last is affordable healthcare. To reach all strata of society is possible only if medical care is individualized according to their support systems and earning potential. Hence, our care plan and expenditure on medications for patients are tailor-made according to their paying abilities. We have added a poor patient's fund to provide subsidized medical care for the underprivileged to facilitate this.

When I recall the past year, the challenges ahead of us have been many from quackery to lack of proper public transport system in difficult areas, theft, computer illiteracy, burnouts etc. Still, we are constantly attempting to rise up to them and tackle them diligently. One of our cornerstones has been the spirit of service which the entire team imbibes and practices every day. May Almighty be benevolent on the team to continue in this spirit of service.

Cheers ,

Dr. Vivek



CO-FOUNDER'S NOTE

BE THE CHANGE YOU
WANT TO SEE IN THE
WORLD - M.K GANDHI

Dear Friends of Sirumalai,

Greetings from Kodaikanal.

I am delighted to reflect on and compile this yearbook for you all to read. The yearbook has briefly enlisted the ongoing programs at Sirumalai Health Center, and we have chosen a few of the many impact narratives that Sirumalai has created on its target community. These stories are closer to our hearts and why we decided to bring them forth because they are of young people - like you and me who are working and have years of productive life ahead of them. It isn't fair for them to be impacted in their activities of daily living or their livelihood with the limitations of their ailments. This is where Sirumalai has attempted to bring an impact on their lives.

My only wish for this little center is that it continues to impact the lives of people around us in its small way.

Regards,
Dr. Sudipta

COMMUNITY OPHTHALMOLOGY

Jeya Mary, a 55-year-old lady, is a pepper picker from Palamalai estate. Her vision had been dim for the past five years. She was squinting to recognize faces and her activities of daily living had been limited. Jeya Mary was brought for vision screening at the Perumalmalai center by her relatives. She had cataract in both her eyes which warranted surgery. She was prepped for the same at the center for fitness and sent to Aravind eye care for the surgery. The surgery was conducted free of cost for her at Theni Aravind.

Today, Jeya Mary has returned to work and earns her living. Our community ophthalmology clinic is at a very nascent stage which does cataract screening and provides optometry services. Nevertheless, it has been a boon to the rural folks. So far, we have screened 59 people. Six of them have undergone cataract surgery.





COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Accessibility to healthcare facilities is complicated in our mountain region due to the poor public transport system. Hence, we started our community outreach services to the difficult-to-access villages.

The doctor-nurse team visits these villages regularly monthly and provides care to the NCD patients and the elderly primarily. The center currently visits three villages - Pallangi, Perangadu and Bharati Anna Nagar.

We plan to extend our services to the Adukkam region this year.



DIABETIC CLINIC

Photographs by Vinay Parade and SHC



Joseph is a young construction worker in his early thirties with pain and a history of weight loss. He was unable to go to work due to extreme fatigue. He came in pain and handed over a vial of analgesic on the table to be injected. A brief history suggested he had been admitted for pancreatitis earlier. A diagnosis of pancreatic diabetes was suspected. His blood sugars were checked, which read high. On the first day post his diagnosis Sr Sathya, our staff, took a glucometer and insulin. She checked his blood sugars in the morning at his home and started him on insulin after informing us and checking the appropriate dose. Slowly, he was sensitized to insulin and to take his injections by himself. Joseph goes to work regularly and is on meticulous follow-up.

Over time, the number of diabetics in our fold has increased, and the need to offer **comprehensive diabetic care** arose. The diabetic clinic was started at each center in response to it. The **DIABETIC CLINIC** each week offers essential blood tests, foot screening and care, eye examination, ECG services, and doctor consults. Recently, the center has been supported with Biothesiometer and Ankle doppler for foot and PVD screening, respectively.

LUNG CLINICS

A DAILY WAGE WORKER'S EVERYDAY BATTLE WITH COPD

Fathima Mary (name changed), a 45-year old lady from the village of Attuvampatty, is a patient with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). She presented to us for the first time with breathing difficulty in an acute exacerbation of COPD. She was subsequently called to our Lung clinic for spirometry and continuum of care. Each year Fathima would have at least 4-5 exacerbations and a minimum of two hospital admissions for which she would get admitted to the Government hospital. She often attempted to avoid that, which meant losing her daily wages. When Fathima came to our Lung clinics, she started on Metered dose inhalers. We decided with her to attempt to bring down these acute exacerbations. True to that, her exacerbations have come down to one or two. Even during these episodes, she can get her treatment at the center on a daycare basis, after which she returns to work, and her daily wages are saved.

COPD is the third leading cause of death. In our daily practice and studying the data from phase one of the village visits, we identified that the burden of COPD was higher in our region than Tuberculosis. As a response to that, we started our LUNG CLINICS every Friday. Those with breathing difficulty and symptoms of COPD are identified, listed and called on Friday. Following which they undergo a pulmonary function test (PFT) and start on treatment as warranted. The center needed an in-house spirometer, and a crowdfunding campaign was launched in April. Friends of Sirumalai supported us in acquiring the spirometer and ever since each Friday this program has been ongoing since May of 2022.





PAIN & PHYSIOTHERAPY

NOBODY DESERVES TO BE IN PAIN

Speak to anyone in the area of Seran Nagar, Naidupuram and they would tell you how difficult it was for Selvarani to walk. Selvarani came to the center with complaints of constant gnawing joint pain. The pain was debilitating enough to make it difficult for her to do her daily chores. To be precise, Selvarani had visited 13 doctors before coming to us including a couple of tertiary care centers. She was diagnosed to have Rheumatoid Arthritis almost everywhere but she couldn't continue treatment anywhere and continued to live in pain.

Things changed over time for her since last year. Selvarani was started on appropriate medication for RA after consultation with our Rheumatologist and she has improved significantly and is pain free. She is able to walk and continue with her daily chores with ease. She has been very consistent with her treatment and visits us regularly on her own because the center is accessible to her and is able to help her alleviate her pain.

Gradually over months as physiotherapy services were added and we began noticing myriads of patients with different types of pain viz. musculoskeletal, neuralgic, cancer pain etc. As a result of which, we began our pain clinic to streamline and offer our services. Currently we have 13 patients with rheumatoid arthritis. Last year, we had 5 palliative care patient 4 of whom passed away peacefully.

Physiotherapy has been an added boon as it bridges and helps ease certain pain which don't find any relief from regular medications.





OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

The center, which started as a modest single physician-led clinic in March 2022, has grown up to two centers with seven full-time employees over the course of 1 year. The **sustenance of the clinic** was our biggest challenge and the highlight of the year. **Staff recruitment, selection, onboarding and training** was an arduous task as the criteria for selecting staff is to hail from the same target area that we serve and a long term commitment towards patientcare apart from competency and qualification criteria.

Laboratory capacity building and training has been given special attention so that many more frequently performed tests can be done in-house instead of outsourcing them. Tests like a peripheral smear to identify the type of anemia, manual platelet count, HbA1C, CRP are being done at affordable cost in the medical diagnostic laboratory attached with the Perumalmalai clinic.



Sirumalai health center has **widened its visibility to the larger medical** fraternity doing similar work across India through a rural hospital network. Work is on progress to have **better links with referral hospitals** like PSG Coimbatore through their community outreach programmes.

Team Building is another aspect we have focussed upon. Review happens every Saturday at noon, with academic presentations and training programmes for staff followed by a potluck lunch. Some classes included suturing skills, sick child assessment, multipurpose health worker training, and a computer literacy programme.

Each month's total footfall has been relatively steady (average 700), and our chronic patient footfall has considerably increased. So far, 11 full-fledged DM clinics have been conducted since November and a total of 33 annual diabetic complication screening completed. A total of 97 spirometry. Eye screening for vision loss has been initiated and a total of 59 patients have benefitted. We distributed spectacles to 7 patients through the clinic and 7 cataract surgeries were conducted at Aravind Eye Care, Theni.

Total footfall for the year at Naidupuram Center and Perumalmalai center were 8202 and 1367 respectively.

Community outreach beneficiaries: NCD - 196, PAEDIATRIC - 110 Total - 607



ASPIRATIONS

Strengthening the health center

The need for daycare services is gradually increasing in our Naidupuram center. We have been facing space constraints. This year we will look at expanding our daycare services at Naidupuram with added beds.

Strengthening outreach activity

Our hills are with poor public transport systems, elderly and women are left behind to fend for themselves regarding ongoing health care. Hence we would like to add more outreach centers, especially in difficult-to-reach villages. This year the center aims to **acquire a vehicle** for community visits and patient transport from difficult to reach regions.

DREAMS
HOPES
DESIRES

Collaboration with other centers

In partnership with PSG, Coimbatore Community medicine department, we would like to initiate a cardiovascular disease prevention program, tobacco cessation clinic, and an alcohol de-addiction programme. Newer community based rehabilitation programs are also in our minds to bring to execution.

Electronic medical Records

Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to deploy an EMR for our daily practice. Our billing is currently managed with my bill book. This year we look forward to **raising funds to install EMR** which links both our health center i.e Naidupuram and Perumalmalai as well as community outreach.



THANK YOU NOTE

Dear Friends of Sirumalai,

In a single sentence, if we had to sum it up, we would say, "Without you, it would not have been possible."

We started our community outreach with a seed fund of Rs 50000, unsure of how many months we could sustain our activities in the villages. Nevertheless, we have received support from all of you, kind souls, at every stage whenever we sought it. Some of you have supported us through your monthly donations for medicines for outreach. Many of you supported our fundraising campaigns for equipment and for setting up our second center for rural folks around Perumalmalai. With your support, we could acquire our spirometer and start our Lung clinics. Similarly, the Perumalmalai center is fully equipped with basic lab facilities, physiotherapy and ophthalmology services only with your support. Through the two fundraisers, we raised 1.42 lakhs and 4.35 lakhs in April and November, respectively.

We also thank the people of Kodaikanal for trusting us and helping us serve better. We promise to continue championing the cause of providing high quality primary care and bringing in equity in healthcare by making it accessible and affordable to all.

We are grateful to the mentors for their guiding light, to the staff for their perseverance, to donors for their generosity and to the people for their love and acceptance.

In gratitude,
Team Sirumalai