

Sam David describes the development of EMFI, CMF's Indian sister organisation



# A journey of joy

## Beginnings

EMFI (Evangelical Medical Fellowship of India) started up in 1971 when several UESI (Union of Evangelical Students of India) members became convinced of the need to form a fellowship for students graduating from medical and dental schools. This movement was known as 'Medical Auxiliary of UESI, till 1974. One of the key triggers was the realisation that Christian medics needed to be a voice against deteriorating ethical standards. Dr Frank Garlick, Professor of Surgery in Vellore, and his wife Val, provided initial leadership.

## Growth of a movement

Convinced of its importance, many doctors joined EMFI and offered their services on a voluntary basis. Dr Nghakliana became Travelling Secretary, meeting students and graduates across the country. The founding General Secretary Dr Mathews started up a journal, *The Voice*.

In 1985 Dr Kuruvilla George and his wife Margaret gave up their home and practice in the UK and settled in India, with KG (as he was affectionately known) taking up the mantle of EMFI leadership and becoming the first fulltime General Secretary. Crucially at this time, a fulltime paid associate worker was appointed: Hansraj Jain, a young theological graduate, taking up the challenge.

So came a new phase of growth in EMFI: more staffworkers joined and the ministry expanded. Realising the need to pioneer Christian fellowships among medical students in unreached medical colleges, EMFI began focusing more and more on student work.

## Recent times

Today EMFI has 18 full time staff and their spouses, all actively involved in the day-to-day activities and in promoting the fellowship's ministry. We continue to work in partnership with UESI staff to coordinate work, especially in the northeast. We are also members of the International Christian Medical and Dental Association.

### EMFI's ministry involves:

- Helping members to realise the call
- Nurturing medical and dental students
- Encouraging fellowship & witness among Christian doctors and dentists
- Promoting mission and Indian medical ministries

Our key strength is working with individuals in college hostels and homes. Staffworkers make regular visits to each medical and dental college. Member graduates get involved in teaching and financial support. Fresh contacts are made through repeated visits;

Bible study and prayer groups slowly form. Most groups meet in hostels or close to college. Staffworkers try to be sensitive to individual needs. Many times, the Holy Spirit leads our workers to specific places, where they find young men and women in need of counsel and prayer. Many issues regarding their calling as doctors and dentists or ethical dilemmas are discussed over a cup of tea or meal. Computers and the Internet have enabled us to communicate with students and graduates more easily, and we thank God for EMFI-UK's help with this.

## New initiatives

**Institute of Medical Mission** was conceived and launched last year as we realised the need to equip and mentor students and graduates who have expressed desires to further their calling. Rather than being campus based, a selected faculty goes to different locations to conduct short courses. Four seven-day *Foundation Courses in Missions* have just been completed. 44 doctors/dentists, nurses and allied health staff have undergone this training, and made fresh commitments to follow the Lord in all aspects of their lives. It is our hope that this initiative will spearhead a fresh move towards medical ministries and mission in India.

**Vishranti** is a project that promotes rest for busy health professionals, encouraging rest and relaxation by facilitating family vacations, and allowing for renewal and reflection. It also focuses on promoting healthy families and links in with life revision and marriage enrichment retreats.

**Luke Society** encourages networks between general practitioners in private surgeries (known as private practitioners in India) and those working for Government medical services, aiming to influence the nature of medical practice and promote a caring culture.

## Final thoughts

EMFI is a wonderful testimony of God's work among doctors and dentists in India. Through years of prayer and faith, today we reach out to students and graduates from over 105 medical and dental colleges all over India. Hundreds of young students, many from other backgrounds, commit their lives in obedience to God's call. It has become a vital component of medical missions in India, with 50 young medical/dental graduates joining missions over the last two years. Pray that God will open doors in other colleges too.

Our prayer is that we will continue to be *The Voice* in the ever-changing world of medicine. Primarily a fellowship, we hope to remain relevant to our members as they respond to God's call. It is a joy and privilege to serve him in the medical and dental fraternity, and to witness something of what God is doing.

*Sam David is General Secretary of EMFI*