



# CMF & ICMDA

## A PERSONAL VIEW

Peter Pattison shares his memories of serving God globally in medicine.



**Peter Pattison**  
is a retired GP and  
former ICMDA  
General Secretary.

**T**he impact of CMF and the International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA), as well as the influence of some of the outstanding pioneers of both movements, have been significant factors throughout my adult life. The tale that follows could, no doubt, be echoed by many other grateful CMF members of my generation and beyond.

I qualified in 1963, the year of the first International Congress of Christian Physicians (ICCP, the precursor of ICMDA) in Amsterdam. In 2014, we returned to the Netherlands for a jubilee celebration at the World Congress of ICMDA in Rotterdam.

Converted at Cambridge in November 1957 and called to medicine two months later, I was privileged in 1959, as a third-year pre-clinical student, to attend what was then the CMF clinical students' conference. There, I met two people who were to have a profound influence on my life – Douglas Johnson (DJ), who had moved from being the General Secretary of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (IVF, the precursor to today's Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship or UCCF) to being Secretary of the fledgling CMF. 'Just the office boy' he would term himself, but in reality, the architect of both CMF and ICMDA. The second was Murray Webb Peplow, formerly a missionary in South India and now a GP in Lymington, Hampshire. He and his wife,

### key points



- It was through the student ministry of CMF that the author was first called into global medical mission in the early 1960s.
- Involved with the early precursor to ICMDA, the author went on to develop links and relationships with Christian medical and dental movements worldwide, eventually becoming ICMDA General Secretary.
- God has worked through many different people and their relationships to achieve great work among and through Christian doctors and other health professionals. CMF has had a significant role in that work.





Oda, were houseparents for the weekend, as they were for many other student conferences. Friends of DJ and staunch supporters of CMF and its student work, they were to provide a home for me and ongoing guidance and encouragement throughout my years abroad.

My clinical years at St. George's, London, allowed me to serve as a medical students' rep for a year on the IVF student executive. During that year, DJ would invite me to breakfast every few months at a London hotel and sow a barrage of ideas in my young, receptive mind.

I spent a year from 1964-5 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), which gave me the opportunity to meet with the Hospital Christian Fellowship (HCF) and its founder, Francis Grimm, from South Africa. HCF's vision and priorities differed somewhat from those of DJ and CMF, but it was a valuable widening of my experience.

DJ was a driving force in the first ICCP in Amsterdam in 1963, even more so when, on home turf, he was the architect and organiser of the second ICCP in Oxford in 1966. At that conference, Murray Webb Peplow met with Sir Herbert Seddon, a senior orthopaedic surgeon and chair of a Medical Research Council working party researching the optimal treatment of spinal tuberculosis (Pott's disease). Sir Herbert was looking for a Christian doctor to continue the clinical research they had begun in Korea.

With a sense of my calling to overseas missions from early in my career and after serving in Zimbabwe, I returned to the UK to get married in 1965. We were ready to go back out to the mission field again but had no idea where or how to go. The meeting of Sir Herbert and Murray Webb Peplow opened that door. And so we served Korea in that capacity for 15 years. CMF and ICMDA had once again had an impact on my life.

During our years abroad, the Medical Missions Refresher Course (now the Developing Health Course) was a valuable resource on two home furloughs. There, we met Denis Burkitt (of Uganda and 'fibre' fame) and Stanley Browne ('Mr. Leprosy'), both of whom were CMF stalwarts and deeply committed to the international scene.

Our years in Korea culminated in 1980 with the launch of Korea CMF, which quickly gained a student membership approaching 2,000 and spawned a generation of Korean medical missionaries.

In 1990, Keith Sanders, who was concurrently General Secretary of CMF and Secretary of ICMDA [see the article in this edition], stirred me (now a GP

in Kent) to visit Poland. It was less than a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and it opened my eyes to the needs of Central and Eastern Europe. A few years later, in 1996, on a three-month NHS sabbatical, I travelled throughout that region exploring aspects of their primary care systems. This included a week in Romania with Doctors' Dilemmas (the precursor of PRIME International – Partnerships in International Medical Education)<sup>1</sup> and attending the ICMDA European conference in Hungary. PRIME, with the influence of its founders, CMF members John Geater and John Caroe, was to be an ongoing element of international engagement.

In 2000, Peter Saunders (then CEO of CMF) opened the way for me to do a couple of seminars at the IFES European Students' Conference in Germany. That gave me more exposure to the scope and challenges of Europe. That same year, I retired from general practice to assume the role of ICMDA

General Secretary, which lasted two years, building on the work of John and Thea Reader (also CMF members). Mark Pickering was concurrently CMF Student Secretary and ICMDA Student Secretary, and we worked closely together. Those two years culminated in ICMDA's World Congress in Taiwan, during which we welcomed Korea CMF as a member of ICMDA.

In 2002 I stepped back from the General Secretary role and, for another six years, served as honorary ICMDA Regional Secretary for Europe. Throughout those years, the support and participation of CMF members, too many to name, was invaluable. I was delighted to pass the baton to

James Tomlinson (now a GP and CMF's Head of Volunteers and Networks) in 2008.

And so, in 2014, I was back to Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Fifty years of experiencing 'The Right Hand of the Most High'. (Psalm 77:10, English Standard Version) Fifty years of privileged partnership with CMF colleagues and friends throughout the world. (And if I failed to mention you, I must crave forgiveness and plead the limitations of space!)

In the last five years, with Peter Saunders moving on from being CMF's CEO to becoming ICMDA's CEO, there have been significant advances in the international work of both CMF and ICMDA. CMF is neither the oldest Christian medical movement (that privilege belongs to CMF Denmark) nor the largest (that is CMDA USA), but its influence has been profound. I wonder where today's generation of CMF members will carry the work at home, in CMF, and across the world through ICMDA. ●

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references (accessed 08/05/24)

1. See [prime-international.org](http://prime-international.org)