

CMF members reflect on the 16th ICMDA World Congress in Hyderabad, India



# ICMDA

## WORLD CONGRESS REVIEW

### About ICMDA

The International Christian Medical and Dental Association began in the '50s with informal meetings between different national Christian medical fellowships. In the late '60s the organisation was formally set up. It now has 84 member organisations and many other emerging fellowships and networks of Christian doctors and/or dentists in a number of other countries. ICMDA's vision is for a Christian witness through doctors and dentists in every community in every nation. See [icmda.net](http://icmda.net) for more information.

In the Footsteps of the Great Servant Healer' was the theme for the 16th International Christian Medical & Dental Association (ICMDA) World Congress held in India at the end of August this year. 847 Christian doctors and dentists from 84 countries gathered for a week in Hyderabad, also known as 'The City of Pearls', and India's fifth largest city.

Several CMF members, volunteers and staff were at the Congress. We asked some of them to share their experiences with the rest of the Fellowship.

The programme started with the Students' and Graduates' Conference, led by talks from Dr Daniel Ho, who superbly kicked off the events with a talk based on exploring the hallmarks of the people of God. This set a great foundation for the rest of the conference by ensuring we had the knowledge of who we are as people of God, and the sense of purpose this places on our lives. [Anne Huckstep]

One of the highlights of the conference was seeing Ho's desire to make Christ known to everybody he met. Pastor Ho boldly shared Christ with those around him at every opportunity, irrespective of their profession or social status. His passion was inspirational and a much-needed reminder of how urgently the world needs to hear the good news. [Bukola Ogunjinmi]

Daily devotional talks set the tone for the Congress. Over three days, Raj Kumar focused on how as Christian doctors we can be 'a light to the nations'<sup>1</sup> representing Christ to the

many colleagues and patients that we meet. We are to walk in the knowledge that his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness.<sup>2</sup> Raj urged us to speak the truth in love, in the knowledge that God has equipped us and will enable us to step up and step out in faith. Charles Price encouraged us with Bible exposition, focusing on the 'Covenant God'. In Christ, we have a new righteousness, a new relationship and a new redemption – 'a covenant to the people'.<sup>3</sup>

Another highlight of attending an ICMDA World Congress was the countless opportunities to meet Christian doctors from every corner of the globe. Different lives, different healthcare systems, different cultures in different countries, all working out God's purposes in the localities where they are placed. I heard inspiring stories reflecting God's provision, power and presence all over the world, as Christian doctors serve as the hands and feet of Christ. [Matt Baines]

Words cannot capture how incredible it was to have fellowship with brothers and sisters in the same profession from over 80 nations in the world – the bond of being one family in Christ far surpassed the fact that we were all previously unknown to one another. It was indeed a privileged glimpse of the 'multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb'.<sup>4</sup> [Felicia Wong]

The meal times were another great opportunity to meet people from all over the world.

I remember talking to a Mexican couple over lunch who told us about their ministry tackling homelessness and poverty in Jalapa, Mexico. For dessert we were joined by a junior doctor from Niger who explained how few doctors there were in Niger, making our staff shortages in the NHS seem inconsequential in comparison. Over another meal, I heard about an oncology surgeon who had devised a Bible meditation programme through which she had seen many patients come to Christ and be healed from anxiety and psychosomatic illness! It was so encouraging to hear how God is working all over the world. **[Emma Pedlar]**

The Congress expanded my horizons about the global mission of the church. For example, I met the South African team preparing for a mission trip to Peru. It was so encouraging to see that God is always at work everywhere and uses people all over the world to expand his kingdom. I also met students and doctors from Europe. Together, we are planning to develop and strengthen the CMF movements in Central and Eastern Europe from where I originally come. **[Anna Pawlak]**

There is not enough space to capture all the stories and lives of Christian doctors from around the world that impacted me! Having spent some time in Papua New Guinea it was encouraging to hear the work of three Christian doctors in Port Moresby share some of their challenges and prayer requests. I was enthused by stories of doctors setting up prayer groups in a town in Uganda, the beginning of a prayer group in a city in Denmark and Christian doctors beginning to meet in a small town in Brazil. **[Matt Baines]**

It was immensely humbling to realise how privileged and blessed we are as a CMF in this country, when I came across many countries in which the Christian Medical and Dental Fellowship consists of only one or two volunteers trying to unite and equip colleagues. This calls me not only to be thankful but also urges me to pray for and consider how we might help to build up and encourage our colleagues in those countries. **[Felicia Wong]**

There were two international nights, each an opportunity for countries or regions to show off their talents. The student's and juniors' international night had a more comical flavour, with a dance number by Norway, a quiz from Oceania and stand up by the Netherlands very own Rick Paul! The UK felt the need to contribute to the main international night, so decided to teach the world to ceilidh! Unfortunately, we didn't bring a ceilidh band with us, so Cotton Eye Joe had to do. The sight of the whole auditorium filled with people 'Stripping the Willow' was a sight to behold! **[Emma Pedlar]**

We had dances, songs, hymns, stand-up comedy, and saw beautiful cultural attire,

and so much more. We were having so much fun that a group of us continued praising and worshipping the Lord in song and dance afterward as we didn't want the night to end. **[Bukola Ogunjinmi]**

There were many breakout sessions to choose from during the day. These included workshops on bioethics, missions, understanding world views and mentoring. I attended a seminar on 'compassion fatigue and burnout'. We looked at how, in the busyness and demanding nature of work, we need to 'be still and know that he is God'.<sup>5</sup> A pastor from Delhi led a seminar on Christ-centred leadership. We explored how as Christian doctors in leadership our motivation should be to reflect Christ, recognising that the leader we become is often based on the leader we follow. We explored how God has given us the capacity to lead in the spheres into which he has called us. **[Matt Baines]**

The ICMDA World Congress afforded me a global perspective of what it looks like to be citizens of heaven but resident aliens in this world; to be medics living for Jesus in godless and increasingly hostile societies. I learned about the waves of assaults (some subtle and some more overt) against Christians in the medical profession, such as the persecution of anyone with any conscientious objection to sanctity of life issues including abortion and assisted suicide in Canada (see *News Review* p5), and even the move to deter anyone applying for the medical profession who might have any such objections (see *Conscience Wars* p6).

Incredible though some of this might appear to be, the issues in other countries only herald what will be coming to us soon in the UK.

It was a wake-up call for me as a UK medic, often with my 'head in the sand' and concerned only with my immediate circumstances, unaware that my freedom to practise as a Christian doctor is being subtly and systematically eroded.

I don't want to wake up one day to a 'new world' in which being a Christian and being a doctor are mutually exclusive and lament the fact that I did not stand up and speak out as a disciple of Jesus Christ because I did not know what was happening.

**[Felicia Wong]**

My experience in India was remarkable. I departed with a greater understanding that although the Congress represented people from different cultures, traditions and healthcare systems, we all had one similarity; a calling to be Christ to those we care for and work with, and to embody grace in the areas in which we are called to serve. **[Matt Baines]**

I am grateful that I had the opportunity to go to the World Congress and I am already looking forward to the next one in Tanzania in 2022! **[Anna Pawlak]**



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## references

1. Isaiah 42:6
2. 2 Peter 1:3
3. Isaiah 42:6
4. Revelation 7:9-10
5. Psalm 46:10