



Paul Harrison Award 2009

The Paul Harrison Award is the accolade of the Christian Medical College, Vellore to alumni who have rendered meritorious service in the area of health care to the neglected and the disadvantaged. Dr. Chongthu Biakmawia now joins this honoured company.

The youngest of nine children, Biakmawia grew up in a village in Mizoram near the border between India and Myanmar. It was so remote and backward that four of his siblings died due to lack of health care. But through perseverance and hard work as well as the encouragement and sponsorship of the Presbyterian Church, Biakmawia secured admission to the Christian Medical College in 1964. The example of several Australian missionaries who served in Vellore in his student days had a formative influence on him. After graduation, Dr. Biakmawia returned to his roots and joined the hospital of his church in Durtlang, Mizoram to which he remained devoted until his retirement in 2005.

In the early years of his service, there were few other medical colleagues and no specialists. The large clinical load covered the whole range of diverse medical needs of a remote community. By force of necessity he became a self-trained multi-competent family physician for the next six years. He then underwent postgraduate training at the University of Liverpool, to return as the first qualified Paediatrician in Mizoram in 1981. Soon the child health services in the hospital expanded greatly, often with over a hundred admissions. Apart from his services in the hospital, Dr. Biakmawia would make extended medical tours in distant parts of Mizoram, going from village to village in difficult terrain. His research on the relationship of Vitamin A deficiency and childhood morbidity led to widespread Vitamin A supplementation as part of the hospital's community health programmes.

Under the leadership of Dr. Biakmawia, the Durtlang Presbyterian Hospital has become an exceptional model for mission hospitals for growth and development in needy areas. Over three decades it grew threefold in bed strength, fourfold in staff strength, adding specialist services, enhanced laboratory services, community outreach activities and a nursing school. On retirement from Durtlang, Dr. Biakmawia has gone on to start a new 60 bedded charitable trust hospital in the capital city of Aizawl, the Bethesda Hospital and Research Centre, with speciality services and nursing training. Shaped by his own childhood experiences and recognising the link between education and health care, he has been active in setting up primary, middle and high schools and one technical university in Mizoram. Indeed Biakmawia has become a familiar household name in Mizoram. A part of the credit for the considerable improvement of health indices and especially of child health in Mizoram surely goes to the untiring work of Dr. Biakmawia. All this would not have been possible without the support and sacrifice of his family who had to share their father with those in great need.

Dr. Biakmawia has pursued the mission of "teaching, preaching and healing" as a village preacher, a mentor for Christian youth and a writer. He has been a convincing example of a modern day missionary doctor. In recognition of his commitment to health needs of his own community and the healing ministry of the Church, and his life long fidelity to the motto of his alma mater, "Not to be ministered unto, but to minister", the Christian Medical College is proud to bestow the Paul Harrison award for meritorious service in needy areas to

Dr. Chongthu Biakmawia

DIRECTOR

Vellore

16.11.2009

PRINCIPAL