

The College Motto award 2006

Dr. RAMANI ATKURI

The College Motto Award, instituted by the class of 1949, aims to recognise and acclaim each year the member of the silver jubilee (or 25th year) reunion batch whose life and work, in the opinion of his / her classmates, has best exemplified CMC's motto, "not to be served but to serve". In this foundation year for this award, it is presented to Dr. Ramani Atkuri for the class of 1981.

Ramanamma (as she is known among us) received her training in Medicine and Community Health at the Christian Medical College, Vellore from 1981 to 1991. Very early during her medical training, she realized the need for health care among the poor and marginalized in India. Her dedication to working with the underprivileged began with constant involvement with the Social Service league during her undergraduate training and has continued throughout her subsequent career.

Recognizing that the need, and the lack of, health services was greater in north India, Ramanamma chose to work in tribal health programs and community health insurance plans in what was then eastern Madhya Pradesh. She then moved to Orissa where she set up a health care program for Saura and Kondh tribals. This was not an easy accomplishment. This is an area where people are poor, and both the environment and the government have little to offer, other than malnutrition, malaria, other infectious diseases and indifference. With limited resources and inaccessible sites, it required determination and a deep commitment to continue to travel from village to village, offering therapeutic services while promoting prevention and basic health. It was Ramanamma's sense of purpose and fortitude that allowed her to continue for four years in this task despite repeated attacks of malaria, the complete absence of governmental administrative and health care support and the challenging circumstances.

When she could not continue her intense and physically demanding work in the tribal areas, Ramanamma began to work with the UNICEF, with assignment to mediate the support provided by the international organization to the Government of Orissa. Her ability to overcome challenges and provide for the needs of the population were best exemplified by her response to the 1999 cyclone that killed many thousands in coastal Orissa and paralysed government health services both immediately and for months afterwards. With no power, no functioning government machinery and no resources, she took charge---from organizing the disposal of the dead to printing instructions in Oriya for the use of oral rehydration solutions, to recruiting refrigeration mechanics to service and move mobile generators and auto-drivers for vaccine transport, she instituted an emergency response and followed through to the entire reconstruction and rehabilitation process until families were reunited and orphaned children adopted.

She now works in a similar role with the Government of Madhya Pradesh, facing the new challenges of enabling the government to provide health care in the dacoit-ridden areas of the Chambal, where the feudal structure and the caste system play a major role in access to health and development services, and government officials have difficulty in accepting a woman in a significant role. With starvation

deaths and malnutrition as a major problem, her focus has been on enabling strategies to impact child survival.

In spite of difficulties and frustrations, she has persevered in her service to the cause of public health in India. Her career so far is promise of greater achievements to come. The community of the Christian Medical College, Vellore, express their appreciation for her commitment to the eradication of poverty and inequity by working at all levels from the grass-roots to the government. They rejoice that, in its foundation year, this award goes to a recipient truly worthy of the heritage of our alma mater.

In recognition of her outstanding contribution to the health and welfare of the people of India, with exemplary faithfulness to the motto of her alma mater, the Christian Medical College, Vellore, is proud to present the very first College Motto Award to

DR. A.V. RAMANAMMA

Awarded at the Annual Alumni Reunion in Vellore on the 12th of August 2006

Dr. Raju Titus Chacko
Secretary
Alumni Association

Dr. Joyce Ponnaiya
President
Alumni Association