

## MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD

Dr. Deepa Anna Choudhrie is, first and foremost, a CMC campus kid. As the daughter of Drs. Thomas and Molly Bhanu (MBBS batch of 1956), she grew up dreaming of the day when she would be part of the vibrant college life at CMC. God turned that dream to reality when she joined CMC as an undergraduate medical student in 1982. On completion of her undergraduate studies in 1988, she worked for a year at the LMS Boys Brigade Hospital, Kundara, South Kerala, as part of her Sponsorship Obligation with the CSI South Kerala Diocese. Her marriage to her batchmate, Dr. Rajiv Choudhrie brought her to Padhar Hospital in 1989, and her service obligation was transferred to the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) in Madhya Pradesh. She returned to Vellore in 1992 for her postgraduation in Medical Radiodiagnosis. Since 1995, Dr. Deepa has devoted herself – her life and skills- to Padhar Hospital and the local community.

She was the first Radiologist in Betul district trained in Ultrasound and CT and continues to be the only female radiologist in the district, which boasts of just three other radiologists. Padhar Hospital was the first to bring Imaging studies to this predominantly tribal (Gond) district with X-rays in 1958, Ultrasound in 1987 and CT in 2006. In keeping with the relevance and affordability of patients, the Radiology Department now has Computerized X-rays, USG, Doppler and CT scan facilities.

Apart from running the busy Radiology Department in Padhar Hospital, Dr. Deepa has taken on several additional roles and responsibilities. Since 1995, she has been the Coordinator of various Allied Health courses run by the Christian Medical Association of India. These include Medical Radiography and Radiotherapy technology, Medical Records Technology and Surgical Anaesthesia technology. The confidence and lifestyle change that these courses have brought to the rural youth has been most rewarding. She was also in charge of the Shahpur Children's Home, an orphanage, belonging to the ELC in MP. She helped raise funds for the education of the children and for the renovation work required to provide them with a safe place to call home.

In 2012, Padhar Hospital found itself in the news - a pair of conjoint twin girls had been left in the care of the Hospital. Dr. Deepa took it upon herself to mother little Stuti and Aradhana. She and Dr. Rajiv reached out to their network of classmates to plan and organize the complicated surgery to separate the twins.

In 2009, Dr. Deepa initiated the Sunday English services in Padhar, which is attended by the young crowd of doctors and nursing students, as well as the large number of foreign visitors to Padhar Hospital. During the Covid lockdown, the service went online as the WOW (Worship Online With) Padhar Service. She serves on the Board of the Happy Valley English Medium School, run by the Padhar Hospital. She has worked tirelessly to improve and upgrade the School, which now serves children from several surrounding villages.

Padhar is certainly a picturesque, idyllic village in the heart of Central India. Yet, it is an area of great need, with challenging circumstances and demanding conditions. A plaque in the OPD reminds Dr. Deepa daily of where she is and why she still works in Padhar: *'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last...'* (John 15:16). And so she continues to work and minister, believing that she lives the Master's plan and that He will help her complete the race.

Dr. Deepa's life and work reflects the College motto, '*Not to be ministered unto but to minister*'. Christian Medical College is proud to honour Dr. Deepa Anna Choudhrie with the Certificate for Meritorious Service for 2022.