

CERTIFICATE FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE

Dr. Sanjeeth Peter joined CMC Vellore in 1982 for his undergraduate medical studies. Even before starting his medical studies, he aspired to be cardiothoracic surgeon. On completing his internship in 1988, he worked in the Methodist Hospital, Nadiad, Gujarat as part of his service obligation. The next year, he moved to the Methodist Hospital in Mathura, UP. All the while, he kept his dream alive – the then Principal, Dr. BV Moses encouraged him to train in Cardiothoracic Surgery and eventually join CMC Vellore.

As most of the best laid plans have a way of changing course, God had other plans for Dr. Sanjeeth. In September 1989, while he was still in Mathura, his former hospital in Nadiad received a unique offer- an opportunity to start a Cardiac Hospital, funded by a local philanthropic business family in the memory of the head of the family. Then then Director of the Nadiad Hospital, Dr. JI Khristmukti, asked Dr Sanjeeth to consider training in Vellore and then returning to Nadiad to build up this Cardiac Centre. Another mentor who encouraged him was Dr. David Thomas, one of the earliest Thoracic trainees from CMC Vellore.

It was not an easy decision to make- Nadiad and Gujarat were never long-term plans for Dr. Sanjeeth and his wife and classmate, Dr. Carol. Aside from the language and setting up home in a rural area, there were pertinent questions of the viability of a ‘Super Specialty Mission Hospital’ in a rural set-up: *Quaternary care and that too affordable, accessible, and available high tech cardiac care? For poor people? In rural Gujarat?* This was unheard of- yet the challenge excited Dr. Sanjeeth, and after much thought and prayer, he accepted the offer.

On completion of his Thoracic training, Dr. Sanjeeth and his family reached Nadiad in April 1996. There was a partially constructed hospital, unopened equipment, and untrained staff. But his rigorous training in Vellore, under the tutelage of Drs. Edwin Ravikumar, Roy Korula and Navin Lal, enabled him to make a start. Within 2 months, the first Open heart Surgery was done in the hospital. Since then, there has been no looking back. From two open heart surgeries a month in 1996 to nearly 350 a year, it has been a long road, filled with challenges and the immense grace of God.

The mission has always to provide the best service- even if the patient cannot afford it. Along with clinical work, the training programs also emphasize excellence. Nearly every cardiac centre in Gujarat has at least one of their trainees. The Centre is rate one of the best for adult Cardiac care. With the support of NGOs and public health schemes, no one is turned away and many pay almost nothing for world-class cardiac care.

Dr. Sanjeeth humbly acknowledges the gracious Hand of an all-providing God in the road thus travelled. Anonymous donors, life-saving equipment, power supply at just the right time- the Lord has been unfailingly faithful. His team – from Cardiologists to the technicians and administrative staff- have given the best years of their lives to the development of the hospital. And there has been his family, supporting and sacrificing, as he invested his life in his work.

From aspiring to being a cardiac surgeon- one among thousands in our county- to heeding God’s call to being a cardiac surgeon in a place where he would make a significant difference to thousands of lives, Dr. Sanjeeth has lived the mandate of the healing ministry and the motto of our Institution, ‘*Not to be ministered unto, but to minister*’. CMC Vellore is proud to honour Dr. Sanjeeth Peter with the Certificate for Meritorious Service for 2022.