

MEDICAL SYSTEMS IN SANTINIKETAN

a) Pearson Memorial Hospital

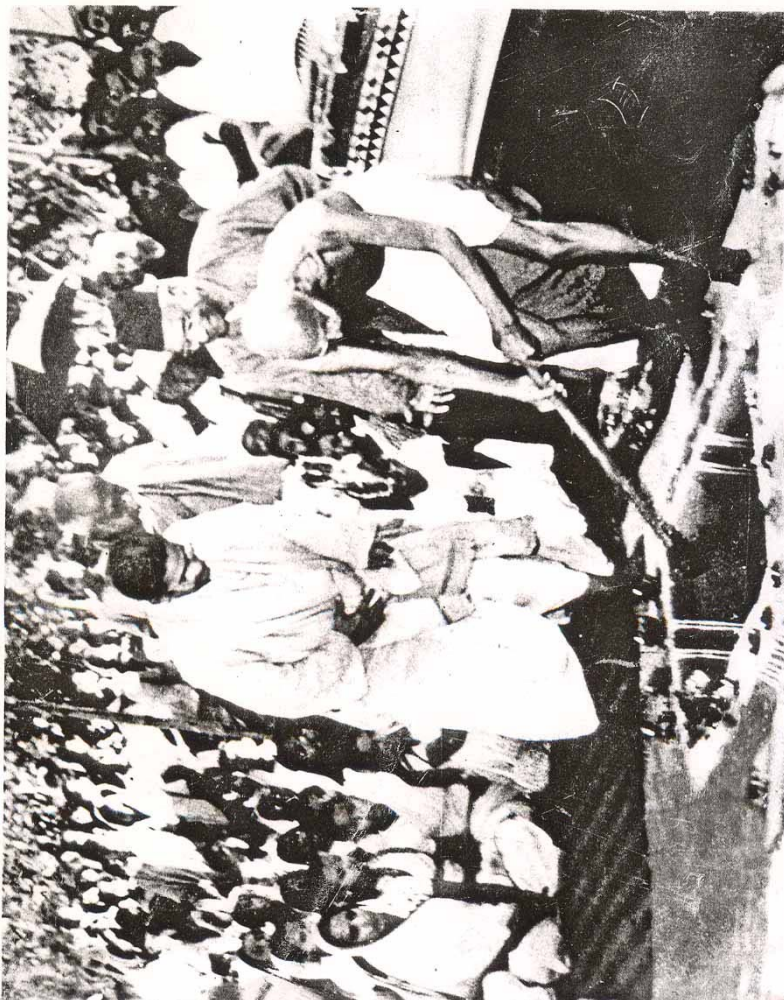
1. The Pearson Memorial Hospital at Santiniketan is performing a useful role to the best of its ability, with all the constraints of finances, equipment and staff. The HLC endorses the Hospital's proposals for an upgradation that enables it to offer its facilities under one roof, the opening of a fully equipped ICCU operated by a cardiologist and trained personnel, as well as the strengthening of its diagnostic services, e.g. USG, Coloured Dopplar Echocardiography and Endoscopy.

2. The hospital, located as it is, cannot restrict its services to VB patients alone. There is merit in the plan to permit the Pearson Memorial Hospital in both its outpatient and inpatient aspects, to service non-entitled patients from Santiniketan on a payment basis. The HLC would recommend that.

3. Patients at present visit the P.M.Hospital for treatment to the extent that the PMH is able to provide that treatment and when that level is found inadequate, they transfer themselves to the Shian Hospital at Bolpur and when Shian fails to serve the purpose required, the patients move on to Hospitals in Kolkata. This is the ascending spiral of demand and supply in the field of medical cover. The HLC would recommend that while the PMH is upgraded by the VB authorities, the Shian Hospital should also be taken up for a major upgradation through the SSDA by the State Government authorities and the VB should enter into an MOU with reputed Kolkata-based nursing homes (e.g., Apollo Hospital, Belle Vue, R. N. Tagore Cardiac Research Institute, B. M. Birla Heart Research Institute) and hospitals (SSKM Hospital, Nil Ratan Sarkar Hospital) so that an integrated facility for escalating attention becomes part and parcel of the medical cover available to VB patients and visitors, *with an ambulance facility*, the ambulance being stationed (with all its equipment) at the Pearson Memorial Hospital. There is a hospital-cum-Institute of Cardiac Research named after Rabindranath Tagore and headed by a very eminent cardiologist, Dr. Devy Shetty, which can rightly claim attention under that title and be deemed suitable for linking with PMH.

4. The HLC would also recommend that the PMH and the VB authorities should take up with the UGC and the Ministry of Human Resource Development the issue of a line of supervisory command and control, inspection and evaluation, improvement and upgradation of all medical units located in Central Universities. The HLC's queries regarding such a line of command and control did not elicit satisfactory answers from the PMH and VB authorities. All government-run hospitals have a clear line of command and control, including and especially inspectorial control. It is very likely that the Central University system which necessarily has medical facilities going with it, already has such a system. But VB and the PMH are in the dark about it. In the absence of technical control and inspection, the PMH has been constrained to work with its limited resources rather like an institutional orphan since it has neither a teaching component (VB having no medical faculty) nor a major attachment to a hospital system.

5. The VC of VB has recommended that Santiniketan and Sriniketan be provided with two or three ambulances fully equipped with personnel and instruments to handle emergency cases requiring transporting to the PMH, Shian, and Kolkata. The HLC endorses this fully.



Mahatma Gandhi turning the first 'sod' for the Andrews Memorial Hospital, Santiniketan on 19 December 1945

This photograph has been obtained by courtesy of *Pratichi*, Santiniketan, where the Chairman saw it while calling on the late Smt. Amita Sen, the distinguished author and *Ashramakanya* and mother of Professor Amartya Sen

b) Andrews Memorial Hospital

1. If the PMH is something of an institutional orphan, there is an institutional destitute on VB's medical scene, namely, the Andrews Memorial Hospital. Named after 'Dinabandhu' C. F. Andrews, it was the result of a major fund-raising undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi at the instance of Rabindranath Tagore shortly after Andrews' demise in 1940. Mahatma Gandhi in fact, personally turned the first sod at the site of the future Andrews Hospital on his last visit to

Santiniketan. Today, this institution is a centre for the dispensing of homoeopathic medicines. Homoeopathy is a recognized and popular system of medicine and, within the State of West Bengal, it enjoys a particularly strong clientele. However, the nature of the homoeopathic treatment provided at the Andrews hospital needs strengthening. The HLC recommends that the Visva-Bharati being a Government of India Institution, the Andrews Hospital at VB should be visited by a technical team from the Department of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy, of the Ministry of Health, Government of India, with a view to converting the Andrews Hospital into a credible centre for providing homoeopathic, ayurvedic and other forms of indigenous medicines by not merely competent but high-grade confidence inspiring practitioners of those systems of medicine with a modest supporting staff. This will require a commendable investment which can come both from Government and outside. The reorganization and development of Andrews Hospital along these lines should receive high priority and start as early as possible.

2. The HLC also recommends that the VB authorities give the Andrews Hospital a new dimension by means of a tie-up with an organizations like the Institute of Naturopathy and Yogic Sciences (INYS) in Bangalore, the Arya Vaidya institutions in Coimbatore and Kerala, the Yoga Centres in Monghyr or the Vipassana Centre run by the Goenka Institute. These bodies are founded with a vision to render affordable care for chronic ailments such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma and arthritis by a judicious blending of the ancient methods of yoga and naturopathy. Other institutions are also bound to offer similar assistance that combine allopathic diagnostics with natural methods with allopathic screenings conducted at intake and during daily meetings with the patient's assigned naturopathic physician; a payment model that enables free care for some patients, a focus on education and lifestyle training with naturopathy in and yoga as a way to renewed health.

3. The HLC recommends that the Andrews Hospital should also offer a psycho-therapeutic dimension in the 'alternative methodologies' now becoming increasingly available, using meditative techniques. This would, apart from offering relief to patients, also serve a traditional Visva-Bharati purpose of linking us with cultures beyond India – Sri Lanka, Thailand and China (including Tibet) for instance.

4. Few things would be in harmony with Andrews an 'alternative missionary' than for the Hospital in his name at Santiniketan to become an 'alternative medicine centre'. Few things would be in harmony with the philosophy of the man – Gandhi – who has famously said that his natural bent was nature-cure.