


HEALTHCARE




DR. K.S. SANJIVI
27 DECEMBER 1903-1 OCTOBER 1994
PROFESSOR EMERITUS,
MADRAS MEDICAL COLLEGE.
FOUNDER
THE VOLUNTARY HEALTH SERVICES
MADRAS

IN PROMOTING HEALTH CARE
VOLUNTARY SERVICES
BRINGING THEM FROM
DOCTORS PARA-MEDICALS
VILLAGE LEVEL
WORKERS,
DOMESTIC AND COMMUNITY
LEADERS
MAIN HEALTH CENTRES
GENERAL
COMPREHENSIVE OUT REACHING
TO INDIVIDUAL
COMMUNITY CARE TAKING
THE FAMILY AS A UNIT.

ADMINISTRATION

வரவேற்பு அறை
MAIN RECEPTION

A Legacy of Compassion and Community:

Voluntary Health Services (VHS)



In the city of Chennai, where healthcare often felt like a luxury for the privileged few, one visionary dared to dream of a transformative reality. Dr. K. S. Sanjivi, the founder of Voluntary Health Services (VHS), envisioned a haven where the city's finest doctors would freely volunteer their time to deliver outstanding care to every individual, regardless of their financial circumstances. Through his relentless efforts and the altruism of Chennai's medical elite, this noble dream came to life. Top doctors pledged three hours a day, three days a week, creating a unique sanctuary

of compassion and excellence that transcended socioeconomic barriers.

A Visionary Leader

"Voluntary Health Services—the name was coined by Dr. Sanjivi, who spoke to the city's top doctors and persuaded them to volunteer their time," shares Dr. Suresh, the Honorary Secretary of VHS. "VHS had the best doctors in Chennai because Dr. Sanjivi requested them to come, even though they had their practices outside."

Dr. Sanjivi believed in a holistic family doctor system, where care extended

to entire families. He introduced a unique scheme, akin to modern-day health insurance, that classified patients into four groups based on their income. The Free Group (FG) catered to those who could not afford to pay, the Lower Income Group served earners up to ₹7500 per year, the Middle-Income Group received a 30% discount on bills, and the High-Income Group got a 10% discount. Additionally, there was a non-subscriber scheme where families earning less than ₹5000 per month could pay ₹500 annually for comprehensive care.

A Journey of Dedication

Dr. Suresh's association with VHS began in 1976 when he joined as a medical officer. "From 1976 to 1982, I served as an honorary consultant, working 8 hours a day, 6 days a week, and 10 nights a month. I was the only physician for a hospital serving 250 patients, delivering primary care without the latest technology," he recalls. As technology advanced, VHS faced the challenge of integrating it into their care model without escalating costs.

In 2012, Dr. Suresh was elected Honorary Secretary and embarked on a mission to revamp the system. "The biggest challenge was funding. We needed to provide care without increasing costs and required the latest equipment," he explains. To tackle this, he formed a strategic task force comprising experts from finance, management, and human resources. After eight months of thorough analysis, they presented a future roadmap, which the VHS board approved, marking a turning point in the hospital's history.

Technology for All

"Our dream is to bring the best technology to the common man. High-end tech is crucial for lower-income individuals as it ensures quick diagnosis and cure, enhancing their productivity," Dr. Suresh emphasizes. VHS operated 10 primary health

centres within a 50-kilometer radius, focusing on preventive healthcare and educating the community about general health and illnesses. Today, six centres remain, including the Orange Centre for diabetic retinopathy diagnosis in collaboration with Rotary Club.

Compassionate and affordable care is the hallmark of VHS. Dr. Suresh firmly believes that healthcare should be equitable, affordable, and accessible. "Hospitals should not view healthcare as a profit model. Any profit should be reinvested into the system, like VHS," he asserts.

Expanding Services and Community Support

VHS has expanded its services significantly. The hospital boasts top-tier de-addiction centres that provide counselling in schools and colleges. The Seva Samajam children's home for orphans receives basic healthcare from VHS. Additionally, the hospital's blood bank supports 350 thalassemia children monthly with free blood.

The projects division at VHS undertakes various fieldwork initiatives.

One notable project is the nerve centre for HIV prevention, which operates across India and in eight other countries. Another project has helped the transgender community come together and gain support. The Infectious Disease Medical Centre at VHS conducts extensive research and clinical trials, with over 900 papers published. The diabetes and endocrinology departments are highly active, continuing to support women in the unorganized sector through the Sahodari scheme, which provides free diabetes medication for a year.

Resilience During the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic tested VHS's resilience and community spirit. The hospital managed to provide regular care while treating COVID-19 patients, adhering to government-mandated costs. Community acceptance and volunteer support were crucial during this period.



Rotary converted an entire ward to meet the hospital's needs, and The Sanmar funded the entire imaging department, transforming VHS into a one-stop diagnosis centre.

Guiding Principles and Core Values
VHS operates by three guiding principles:

Clean VHS: Maintaining cleanliness & hygiene.

Green VHS: Creating a natural setting for faster patient recovery.

Happy VHS: Ensuring employee happiness, which translates into better patient care.

"Healthcare must come from the heart. VHS has made significant progress, and one can see the change. We are able to see more smiles," says Dr. Suresh. The 69-year-old VHS hospital continues to uphold Dr. Sanjivi's legacy. "This hospital stands for the community, of the community, and by the community. We are just mere passers-by," Dr. Suresh reflects.

Bridging Generations

Addressing the younger generation of doctors, Dr. Suresh emphasizes



the importance of trust. "Every doctor needs to create trust with their patients. Live up to the trust they place in you. Our logo says, 'We serve the people who serve you' and we proudly live by that."

A Legacy of Compassion

The journey of VHS, as recounted

by Dr. Suresh, stirs up many memories. "It is always a matter of pride to talk about VHS. There is no end point; every milestone gives us more enthusiasm to do more," he shares. The recognition and appreciation for their work serve as a driving force, bringing immense responsibility. "We have a fantastic team behind the success of VHS today—COO, CFO, HR. They bridge the gap between the community and doctors, maintaining trust. It was the turning point for having the right people at the right time doing the right things," Dr. Suresh acknowledges.

A Model for Future Generations

VHS's story is not just about providing healthcare; it's about building a compassionate community where every individual, regardless of their financial status, has access to high-quality medical care. The legacy of Dr. Sanjivi and the continued efforts of many dedicated individuals like Dr. Suresh ensure that VHS remains a beacon of hope and a model for

community-driven healthcare.

The ongoing journey of VHS, with its emphasis on trust, innovation, and compassion, serves as an inspiration for future generations of healthcare providers. As Dr. Suresh aptly puts it, "We serve the people who serve you," encapsulating the spirit of VHS in a single phrase.

The Spirit of VHS

VHS embodies the spirit of unwavering dedication, the relentless pursuit of excellence in healthcare, and an enduring passion for compassion. This institution, built on the foundations of selfless service, continues to inspire and uplift, demonstrating that with a heart full of compassion, healthcare can be a powerful force for good in the world. As a hallmark of a true champion of Chennai, VHS exemplifies how dedication and compassion can transform communities and elevate healthcare standards for all.

- Shobana Ravi