

'Hospital with a Big Heart.....helped into being by the hearts of many'

Dr Pratap Midha and Sujata Rathi in conversation with Dr Julia Phythian-Adams and

Address by Sister Jayanti

Organized by the Janki Foundation and by the Brahma Kumaris

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David Kilowsky welcomed everyone into the hall with beautiful live music and sounds of the flute whilst a slide show of J Watumull Global Hospital & Research Centre (GHRC) was being played with over 210 present and 110 joining online...

Dr Julia Phythian-Adams introduced the evening and invited **Dr Pratap Midha** and **Sr Sujatha Rathi** to a conversation. She also introduced the organisers, the Janki Foundation and the Brahma Kumaris. The Janki Foundation (JF) places a lot of importance on compassion and kindness for maintaining wellbeing and preventing illness. One of the key objectives of JF is to support GHRC by sending regular financial support.

Julia is a doctor by profession, and particularly interested in holistic healthcare. She practiced as a GP in multicultural and poor urban areas of Sheffield for many years. Since childhood she has been interested in working as a doctor in India or Africa, particularly village outreach work.

Both Dr Pratap and Sr Sujata have both been involved with the hospital since its inception.. The hospital started 25 years ago in Mount Abu, Rajasthan, India, and has developed over the years into a fully-fledged hospital with a particular emphasis on holistic healthcare. One person was touched when they noticed that the hospital was built around a tree and that this somehow *'creates an energy of love not fear'*. The mission of the hospital is to provide world class, complete healthcare services responsibly, yet with a human touch, and part of the vision was to create healthcare for all regardless of economic or social background.

Please find below some of the points and questions that arose in this fascinating conversation that focused on the achievements of GHRC as well as the challenges that it has faced in its development:

- Br Nirwair, a senior brother within the Brahma Kumaris, and now also Managing Trustee of GHRC, sowed the seed when he expressed that some sort of healthcare system was needed in Mount Abu and he invited Dr Pratap to come and set this up. Since then the hospital story has happened like magic and is never ending.
- When the intention is good, effort is sincere and support is big - anything can happen and has.
- There are now further hospitals created and almost 600 staff work at Mt Abu and Abu Road (base of Mt Abu).
- *Patients want and need to share their dilemmas and so we wanted to come up with a patient centered hospital.*
- Today's hospitals are often more focused on technology and staff. Yet the patient needs a comfortable and peaceful setting and caring staff in order to heal.
- At first we wondered what we were doing. Yet it was by Divine design and slowly it unfolded and happened.
- Dr Vinay Lakshmi started looking after those who were building the hospital and then she began to visit the villages and then the outreach work began. This was a case of having love for the people around you. The people who live in this mountainous area mostly had never entered a hospital, nor were they interested in it but with the outreach we have accomplished a lot. The focus is on preventive healthcare, promoting good health, rather than just curative.
- *This hospital is based on spirituality. Whilst working in the hospital I have grown spiritually.. and also it doesn't feel like a hospital.....it is such a nice environment.*
- Diet is a critical aspect of promoting good health. Yet people don't like dieticians and being told what to eat so to motivate people to change diets can be tough. We explain the outcomes of the different diets and then this inspires people to follow a diet plan. Yet over 90% don't follow. We have learnt to develop a lot of patience with our patients!
- In the Wellness Department we offer many different complimentary practices such as Ayurveda, yoga, dietetics, fitness, and spiritual counselling. We work holistically and always aim to move someone from illness to wellness. We are getting good results with this approach.
- People hold such a range of beliefs around health and lifestyle and how to go about improving it. We often have to bridge cultural gaps and find meeting points.

- Meditation is our strength and we are integrating this into medicine. The principal cause of illness is the way we live our life and we understand that if we rectify our living then illnesses can disappear of their own accord.
- One of the major killers today is heart disease. We studied the effects of meditation and relaxation. We found that with open eyed meditation people became more relaxed. Now it is known. Yet people need to be taught what to do and develop self-empowerment skills. We also see that compliance is very poor even with regular medication. But once explanations are given: for example what heart disease is and what the risk factors are people get more motivated to change.
- Hospitals all over India are now waking up to the benefits of supporting people change their lifestyles, however most clinicians are sceptical and would go straight to tertiary care, i.e. operating.
- With the Brahma Kumaris network and word of mouth there is growing awareness of this approach and of primary prevention.

- **Is there any radiological evidence that this overall approach makes any difference to the blockage in arteries? Have you been able to convince medical colleagues with practical evidence?**
- Everyone understands that even with bypass surgery and angioplasty patients need to change their lifestyle anyway. We advise before we get to that point.
- It is similar with diabetes. We have a 5 day programme at the hospital for diabetics. We can prevent diabetes through diet and exercise. Type 2 is really about education. Everyone likes sweets...we don't advise people to stop sweets, as they can be a good carbohydrate. But if we wish to celebrate food then we need to exercise. 10,000 steps a day is good to maintain and then there is a margin to eat something sweet.
- People come to GHRC because there is such a positive attitude. Many staff and patients practice meditation. Many of our problems are resolved with the help of meditation. Many people who come to us need orientation into spirituality. We need professional people and we expose them to meditation.
- We have also created structured counselling programmes. The beauty of the counsellor is they listen for 45 mins and speak for 5 mins. This year the theme of WHO is 'depression, let's stop'.

- **I know that the medical profession can tend to focus in on one disease in one organ and not look at the whole person. Do your medical staff take the holistic approach you are advocating?**
- Clinicians are sceptical. Some don't approve of it. But if the patient gets the benefit then who can criticize it. I feel we need to witness and experience and this becomes the proof. E.g. in the magneto therapy department so many people experience benefit and don't need pain killers. We use magneto therapy for stroke patients and cerebral palsy and we can see results. So if non pharmacology departments thrive why don't we accept it!
- Modern medicine is needed but for most of the non-serious illnesses there are many other ways to heal, e.g. homeopathy. We need to appreciate each other and then the bridges will be built. It depends also so much on the person who is giving the healing.
- *Compassion, love, care and listening with attention make all the difference. We need to accept the patient.* Often doctors have a 'I'm the doctor and you're the patient' attitude. *The most important thing is patient empowerment.*
- Meditation helps relaxation. Cost can be brought down by relaxation exercises.

- **Sometimes spiritual ideas can seem a bit of a luxury when people are struggling to survive and with diseases of poverty. How have you been able to engage and 'meet' the poorer populations?**
- We started by teaching positive thinking and they were very receptive. We also support many villages and schools with education and nutrition supplements. Health is very complex. We need clean water and hygienic surroundings. We always look at the impact we make on people's lives. Have the weight and height in children increased? Are the educational programmes working to improve grades?
- For TB patients we have been providing nutritional supplements with medicines as people need to be strong enough to fight the disease. Disease can lie dormant for many years and due to stress or poor nutrition it gets activated.
- There is a lot of community work that goes on. *This is a hospital without walls.* It also focuses on children in many ways and we reach out to the villages. Now we use mobile phones to educate with videos that they can pass around. But it does need to be an integrative approach....housing, education, healthcare....

- There is also a school of nursing that is training local people and will create employment in the long run. We focus on the girls and yet we also see boys coming. We have diploma, degree and postgraduate courses. We are able to offer employment in our hospital or they go elsewhere. We make this option available to them and have introduced some scholarships to support them. Nursing is the key area for it is nurses who spend most of the time with patients. They need to be trained well and we also train them in *Values in Healthcare: a spiritual approach (VIHASA)*. The focus is on experiencing their values and how they use them for their professional work. It is a very simple experiential programme. *The most important aspect of this is self-care.*
- **How do the staff cope when it gets stressful?**
- We create an environment where people talk softly and at the same time there are certain standards we maintain and we resolve problems. There are many criteria and standards to fulfill but the most important thing is to be self-aware...whether working in the kitchen or a clinician.
- **How do you attract staff to come to this remote place?** We advertise and recruit in medical journals. We have to then keep them. Many love the place, even though it is remote. Some areas we have consistency and others a lot of staff turnover. Most people enjoy working within a smaller place. Mount Abu is not so commercialized and it is the Brahma Kumaris HQ....people feel the spiritual vibes at this place and some are attracted to that. Some are not. So it is personal choice. We attract people who wish a quieter peaceful life.
- **What proportion of people meditate in the hospital?** We have the principle in the hospital that everyone before starting their work take 5 mins to pray or meditate. *Early morning meditation brings great mental health.* We encourage this. 80% of people are following this. There is a nice bridge between spirituality and professionalism. It brings the capability to listen to patients.

Q&A

- Relax the mind and reduce the cost....this is a fantastic idea...
- I feel that the medical profession needs to take the lead. These people understand the physiology of stress. The most important part is feeling good. *We discovered that the vacuum within us needs to be filled with meditation.*
- We have many reviews on how people respond when they adopt meditation to the challenges of smoking and drinking etc. Most develop an aversion to these old habits.
- We all devise our ways to destress. It shows that with clinical results meditation alleviates so many stress related illnesses.
- **After 25 years the hospital has come a long way...what would you like to see happening in the next 25 years?**
- *Research, development and technology.* We need to document the benefits of meditation more. To reach out to more clinics and people.....to focus more on education, awareness and simple things that benefit people.
- I am a heart specialist in the NHS for the past 25 years....the difficulty we have to make people understand this noble work is a huge challenge. There is a different mindset in mainstream medicine...We tell people there is a block that can kill you, so we remove the block through surgery. You tell people to forget the block and relax and this will then unblock the artery naturally.
- If we are telling people to relax the mind as this will improve their illness, we need proof.
- **Some faith healers say that mantras can cure conditions? What is your comment on these people?**
- They try to take advantage of people often. There is also the biology of belief and once the mind is convinced anything can happen. First and foremost we have to find the cause of illness and deal with this. Some people give mantras and it can work but I don't know. The most important thing is to cut off from the external situation.....mantras help us do this....but we need to understand well before we accept them.
- *It is not as though we are saying one thing is best. We are not trying to undermine modern medicine. It is needed and is vital to our health, but if we are open in our approach and we focus on lifestyle and right kind of diet and stress management then people would benefit much more. We can put all the ways under scientific scan. There are so many studies on meditation and now in many medical schools spirituality is seen as relevant to our lifestyle and healing. Yet the policy makers and those who design the courses need to pay attention to this.*

Sister Sujata led a fitness demonstration to everyone's delight and completed it with the chanting OM. Everyone felt invigorated and calmed before listening to Sister Jayanti's address.

Sister Jayanti:

I personally enjoyed the insights shared as we focused on health and spirituality in a big way this evening. We are a spiritual university. The intention of the founder Brahma Baba was to bring spirituality into every sphere of life. It started with a small group studying these things in a united India and then in 1950 they moved from Pakistan to Mount Abu and we have been there ever since. Now the university spans over 130 countries which indicates that these ideas are relevant as people come to practice these ideas. These ideas are not divorced from life. In fact spirituality is life itself (soul and body working together). Over the years we have developed different wings for areas of life and endeavor so that people from these can take the teachings and apply them in their life.

If we think about what is happening in the world it is a crisis of values as people have moved from the inner world to the outer world and the extremes of materialism. We can see values are missing and this creates a lot of suffering and sorrow.....we can all see this...so to bring spirituality back to the individuals and professions is the need of our time. We feel the difference and others notice this difference. The biggest advertisement is word of mouth. People see this difference and ask what is happening.

These are simple ideas focused on three aspects. Knowing the self..who am I...with the understanding of how all the different parts of me work together so that I learn to be at peace with myself. If I can be at peace with myself then I can learn to be at peace with you. When I am peaceful then I can be an instrument for peace at work and at home.....then can you imagine what is possible? It is possible to create peace in the world. We started with a vision that it is possible to create a world of love, peace and truth.....

We see two forces working together now... the forces of darkness....but equally the ascending energy and uplifting force..... we have heard the scientific evidence for the transformation of heart disease...so things are happening quietly and they are gathering traction and acceleration. We are going to come to a point of critical mass where these are accepted.....I hope tonight has given hope which expresses that it is possible to have a life of hope and health.

Sister Jayanti shared a few minutes of reflection:

Health, Well-Being and the power of the mind.....reflecting on these things that I have heard about....I go on an inner journey and explore the thoughts in my own mind....in an atmosphere of peace and calm.....it is easy for the mind to move in a very pure and peaceful way.....instead of thoughts going here and there.....I allow my thoughts to reflect on peace.....feel peace....peace is natural.....peace is comfortable.....peace is who I am.....I hold this awareness of peace.....and peace in my mind.....impacts my physiology....and my body returns to a state of harmony and order.....my thoughts of peace reach out and create an atmosphere of peace....and the vibrations of peace reach out far beyond this room....out into the world.....touching the entire human family..... touching all forms of life.....and the elements of nature.....our thoughts of peace create a world of peace.....I keep peace with myself as I come back to the awareness of the physical dimension.....and my aim is to hold this peace as I go out of here, carrying this peace, so that I may be an instrument for peace....Om Shanti....

Sister Jayanti expressed that Dadi Janki, after whom the Janki Foundation is named, and who is now 101 years of age, sent her love and greetings for this event and that her thoughts and good wishes are very much with us.

Julia thanked everyone and a sweet and gifts were then shared with all.

ENDS