



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

13TH ASCoN CONFERENCE 2014

GIVING BACK THEIR LIVES

Thousands of people suffer from Spinal Cord Injury in Bangladesh. CRP (Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed) is the only organization of its kind in Bangladesh that offers them a holistic treatment that includes training and rehabilitation programmes. ASCoN (Annual Asian Spinal Cord Network) was established during an international conference held at CRP, Bangladesh, in 2001. Representatives from rehabilitation centres and hospitals came together to discuss how to sustain the momentum and interest that was generated during this conference. The consensus was that organisations in the Asia region were working in isolation. It was felt that a network like ASCoN would provide a plat-

form for these organisations to come together and share and learn from each other. ASCoN became an affiliated society of the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCOs) in 2004 and now has 75 member organisations in 18 countries in Asia.

This year the conference will take place from November 27 – 29, 2014 at BRAC – CDM, Khagan, Savar. The main theme of the conference is "Living Life to the Full".

There are six sub themes for scientific paper presentation: Community Based Rehabilitation, Operative versus Conservative Management, Urological Management, Psychological Rehabilitation, Role of the care givers and Inter-

professional approach for persons with SCI.

Around 350 participants will attend the conference. ASCoN executive committee consisting of 15 members from eight different countries (Bangladesh, Malaysia, India, Vietnam, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Ireland and Myanmar) will present. The workshops and parallel sessions of the conference will be facilitated by renowned expert resource persons from different countries like- Australia, UK, Poland, Denmark, USA, Belgium, Netherlands, and Germany etc. Also from the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCOs) the present and past presidents are going to participate in the conference. Different international and local professionals, physicians, physiotherapists, occupational

therapists, doctors and surgeons are going to attend and present key notes.

Local authorities, government and non-government bodies and students are expected to attend the conference. Moreover, the Honorable Health Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has already confirmed to be present as the chief guest of the opening session and the Honorable State Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as the chief guest of the closing session. Honorable Local MP of Savar, Director General of Health Services, Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare, Country Representative of ICRC and Head of Delegation of WHO will be present as special guests.

VALERIE ANN TAYLOR

Founder and Coordinator of CRP

Valerie Ann Taylor was born on 8th February 1944, in Bromley, Kent, UK to parents Marie and William Taylor.

Valerie is a Fellow of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (FCSP) and first came to Bangladesh with the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) in 1969 to work as a physiotherapist in the Christian Hospital, Chandraghona in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. At that time Bangladesh was still known as East Pakistan.

During the 1971 War of Independence, Valerie was evacuated but returned to the country in October 1971, two months before the independence of Bangladesh.

In 1973 Valerie returned to England to attempt to raise funds to establish a rehabilitation centre for paralysed people. She stayed in England for two years before returning in 1975. It took another four years before CRP was able to admit its first patients in 1979. During this time, Valerie worked in the Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital in Dhaka and it was in the grounds of this hospital that CRP had its first premises, two cement store rooms which were used to treat the first spinally injured patients. CRP then found a permanent home and moved to Savar in mid 1990 where the head office is situated.

Valerie received the OBE (Order of the British Empire) in 1995 from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Arthur Eyre Brook Gold Medal in 1996 and the Bangladesh Independence Award in 2004. She has also received:

National Social Service Award (2000), by the Ministry of Social Welfare; Anannya Top Ten Awards (2000); Millennium Award (2000), by the Cultural Reporters Association; Dr. MR Khan and Anwara Trust Gold Medal (2001); Hakkani Mission Bangladesh Award (2001); Rokeya Shining Personality Award (2005); Mahatma Gandhi Peace Award (2009); Lifetime Achievement Award (2009), by Hope Foundation for Women & Children of Bangladesh (USA); Nova Southeastern University Award (2009) and innumerable other awards.

In 1998 Valerie was granted Bangladeshi citizenship by the Bangladesh Government.

Valerie has been legal guardian to two Bangladeshi girls Poppy and Jyoti for several years. She continues to live adjacent to the CRP-Savar premises with her younger adopted daughter, Poppy while Jyoti, the eldest, who works as a computer operator in the CRP office was married in 2007.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Founded in 1979 in response to the desperate need for services for spinal injured patients, the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) has grown into an internationally respected organisation. Today CRP is the only organisation of its kind in Bangladesh, a country with a population of more than 150 million. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that 10% of the population in Bangladesh is disabled. CRP focuses on a holistic approach to rehabilitation, recognising that all aspects of the rehabilitation process are vital for its success:

Physical rehabilitation includes medical and therapeutic interventions and the provision of appropriate mobility aids. Counselling and sharing of experiences, meanwhile, are part of the psychological rehabilitation.

CRP provides vocational re-training and helps its patients to get micro-credit loans so that they can start earning – a part of the economic rehabilitation.

Even after they go home, CRP continues to take care of them, making sure that their homes are safe and accessible, that people around them are sensitive to their needs.

SUB-CENTRES OF CRP

CRP's headquarters is in Savar with sub-centres in Mirpur, Rajshahi, Barisal, Chittagong, and Moulvibazar where patients are treated for Spinal Cord Injury. In addition, CRP-Ganakbari is a residential vocational re-training centre for disabled women and girls and CRP-Gobindapur is a centre for out-patient and community based services. Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) projects operate in 13 districts.

TRAINING FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

CRP's academic institute, the Bangladesh Health Professions Institute (BHPI) has pioneered the training of relevant health professionals in Bangladesh. Some courses are the only ones of their kind in the country.

CRP also awards merit-based scholarships every year for academic excellence of its students. Stipends and free tuition are also provided on need basis.

IMPACT ON THE SOCIETY

CRP continuously aims to educate people through various programmes, on safe working and living practices. It attempts to break down the barriers, superstitions and stigma which prevent disabled people from enjoying equal rights and opportunities.

After the collapse of Rana Plaza in 2013, CRP was one of the first responders providing medical teams on the spot, blood bags, ambulances and other vital medical assistance. It also provided longterm support and rehabilitation for victims with spinal cord injuries, amputation of limbs and any other disabilities. CRP is dedicated to helping those affected by the disaster and they are able to do this by providing treatment, therapy, assistive and mobility devices, artificial limb/legs and livelihood training free of charge.

MEDICAL SERVICE WING AT SAVAR

The hospital at CRP-Savar is the only hospital in Bangladesh that specialises in the treatment of spinal cord injuries. The 100-bed hospital receives over 400 admissions as in-patients each year. Some patients are managed conservatively, whilst others require

surgical intervention. The majority of patients arrive long after their accident or illness, when complications are difficult to manage. CRP has two well-equipped operating theatres. Several different surgical procedures are carried out at CRP including spinal fixation, surgery on spinal tumour and club foot.

Patients admitted to CRP-Savar with spinal cord injuries of both traumatic and non-traumatic origin are treated in the rehabilitation wards through a holistic approach, by a multidisciplinary team (MDT). Out-patient services are available six days a week, except government holidays, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm except Thursday (8:00 am to 1:30pm).

CRP has a highly skilled nursing staff complemented by input from foreign volunteers. The nurses are engaged to look after the patients' physical condition. This includes bladder neuropathy, bowel and pressure sore management. Pressure sores are the main complication for paralyzed patients. Measures are taken in order to prevent pressure sores developing. Special dressing techniques are required to aid wound healing as well as treatment for infection and blood transfusions if necessary. Pack beds are used, which are designed to relieve pressure from the wound area. Improved diet is offered with additional nutritious foods and vitamin supplements. Where necessary, reconstructive surgery is performed to manage the unhealed sore.

CRP has a Nursing College that offers a four-year B.Sc. Nursing and a three-year Diploma in Nursing Science and Midwifery.

Learning from EACH OTHER

ASCoN was established in 2001. Representatives from rehabilitation centres and hospitals came together to discuss how to sustain the momentum and interest that was generated during this conference. ASCoN works as a platform for organizations to come together and share and learn from each other. ASCoN became an affiliated society of the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCOs) in 2004 and now has 75 member organisations in 18 countries in Asia.

ANNUAL ASCoN CONFERENCE

The annual ASCoN conference is the main activity of the Network and covers all aspects of spinal cord injury management, treatment, rehabilitation and community integration. The conference provides an opportunity for people in the Asia region to come together and network with others nationally, regionally and internationally, to share ideas and best practices and to discuss or debate dilemmas and the latest developments and innovations in spinal injury management. An SCI consumer workshop is now held each year at the annual ASCoN conference and wheelchair sports have also become a feature.

MISSION

ASCoN consists of a group of organisations in the Asia region that have come together to share and learn from each other in all aspects of spinal cord injury management, from initial treatment of the patient to re-integration of the person.

OBJECTIVES

1. To strengthen spinal injury services and human resource development for organisations and people working in spinal injury management in the Asia region.

2. To share information, ideas and knowledge of best practices in spinal cord injury management among members.

ACTIVITIES

ASCoN is now recognized as a catalyst for the development of rehabilitation services in low-resourced countries. Recently the ASCoN SCI Consumer Network has been formed. It is a network comprising people with SCI from the Asia region. Established in 2009. The ASCoN Consumer Network has grown steadily and now has a membership of organisations that represent people with spinal injury from eight countries, including Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Nepal, India and the most recent member, the Spinal Injuries Association of Korea. The project has enabled members from various countries to meet, share experiences and to plan future activities.