

Surgical training and cervical screening in rural India hospitals

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Rural Development Trust is a project supported by the Spanish NGO Vicente Ferrer Foundation aimed to provide the best social and educational resources and healthcare facilities, especially for women and children of Anantapur District in India.¹

The Vicente Ferrer Foundation initially established two hospitals in Kalyandurga and Bathalapalli 25 years ago (Figure 1), providing care to a population of 2.5 million people. These hospitals are run by the charitable trust of the Vicente Ferrer Foundation and provide free or low-cost medical services to those in need.

SURGICAL TRAINING IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT TRUST HOSPITALS

At the beginning of this century, Dr G. Lazaro, began skill-based educational programs in obstetrics and gynecology for the doctors employed in these hospitals. This program has been working for the last 25 years thanks to many anonymous Spanish doctors.

Dr Balasubbaiah, who started learning vaginal and laparoscopic surgery through this program, has remained working in this institution and has become a role model for the younger generation. Our main job



Figure 2 Surgical session in Kalyandurga Hospital

as external visitors is teaching surgery and managing oncological cases and complications (Figure 2). These programs would not have been possible without the support of a group of highly skilled surgeons from India (Dr Patil, Dr Magdum, Dr Kubde),

who regularly participate and impart their knowledge and skills of surgery without any financial benefit.

Women with gynecological cancers are treated with suitable surgical procedures. At this juncture we would like to fondly



Figure 1 Kalyandurga Hospital Hall

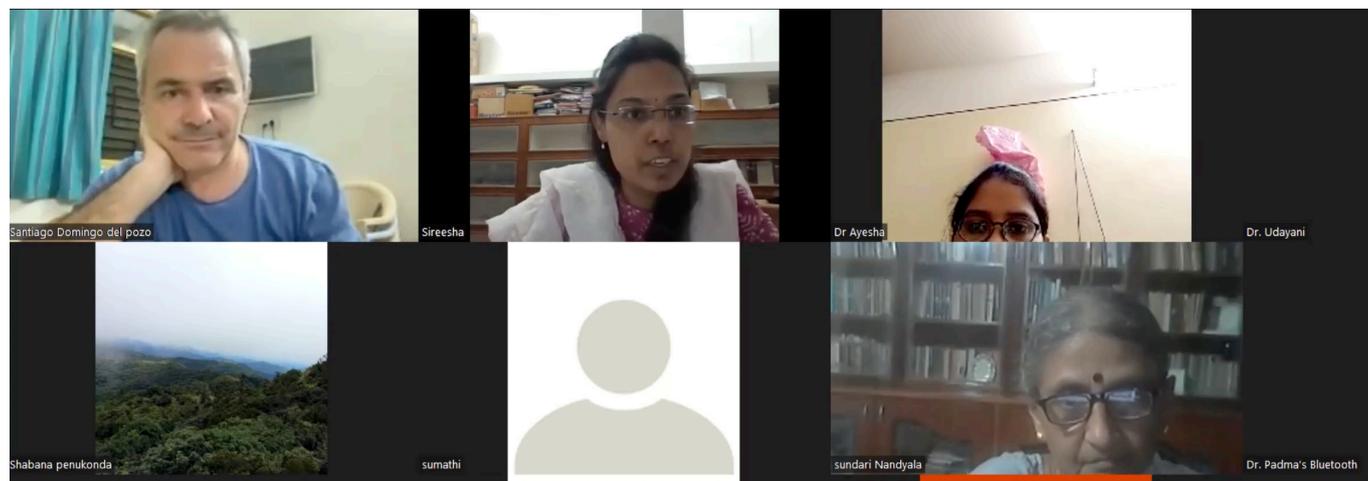


Figure 3 Surgical session in Kalyandurga Hospital

remember and pay tribute to Dr Praveen Rathod, a great oncosurgeon from Kidwai Institute of Oncology (Bengaluru, Karnataka), who used to operate regularly and transfer his patients to Kidwai Institute for further management. His untimely demise has created a large vacuum in the field of oncology in Bathalapalli. He is just one example of the great gynecological surgeons India has given to the world.

PREVENTIVE ONCOLOGY WORK IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT TRUST HOSPITALS

Lancet Oncology reported that India could eliminate cervical cancer by 2079 with effective implementation of primary and secondary prevention strategies.² But sadly, these screening programs have not been effectively implemented. There are regular educational program meetings, not only for gynecologists and healthcare practitioners from Rural Development Trust hospitals, but also for all community doctors, and we support them with our Spanish experience (Figure 3).

WHO recommends a screen and treat policy for low resource setting countries to diagnose and treat women at the same visit in order to prevent multiple visits to the hospital. VIA (visual inspection with acetic acid) is an option.³ Bathalapalli has been

conducting population-based screening programs, but it is not reaching all the population, as it is done opportunistically. In 2015, 59 million women worldwide received at least one vaccine, but only 1.4 million were from low income, and lower or middle income countries.⁴ If we want to change the history of cervical cancer, a true commitment is needed from all the national health programs, whatever the country, to extend the use of vaccines.

Poverty is not to be understood, but to be resolved. (Vicente Ferrer)

I would like to dedicate this article to our beloved late Dr Praveen Rathod.

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