



The XVI International Christian Medical and Dental Associations' World Congress

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The XVI Quadrennial ICMDA World Congress was held from 21-26 August, 2018, at Leonia Holistic Destination, Hyderabad, Telangana, India. The theme of the congress was “In the Footsteps of the Great Servant Healer,” the focus being to “Reflect-Repent-Renew.” It was inspired by the verse from Isaiah 42:6, “I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations.” (ESV) The congress was well attended, with 847 delegates representing 86 countries. The congress was organized by the International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA), Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI), and Evangelical Medical Fellowship of India (EMFI). The program consisted of Bible expositions, devotions, plenaries, and a wide range of workshops / sessions over the 6 days on 88

topics, with 81 facilitators who were experts in their areas of work / mission.

Students and Junior Graduates' Congress

Students and junior graduates met for 3 days prior to the main congress. Dr. Daniel Ho (Malaysia) gave the Bible expositions, calling them to be a commissioned, committed, and compassionate people, serving as a contrast, compass, companion, comrade, and catalyst to “regularly affect the situation” amid global healing contexts while “serving people with no strings attached.” Dr. Helen Sigua (Philippines) spoke on health and wellness as well as leadership in healthcare.



Four Pre-Congress workshops for graduates were held on 22nd August: ‘Saline Process,’ ‘Christian Perspective and Christian Response to Mental Health,’ ‘Kingdom of God in Health Care,’ and ‘Whole Person Medicine Education

(PRIME).’ The “Family Time” on 22nd August was a meeting for leaders of national organizations, organized for the first time to build capacity of and fellowship among the leaders of national movements.

Main Congress

Dr. Vinod Shah, CEO, ICMDA, commenced the inaugural ceremony by saying a word of prayer and delivering his welcome address, and Dr. Bimal Charles, General Secretary, CMAI,



formally introduced the dignitaries on dais including Dr. Elmer Thiessen, Chairperson, ICMDA, Dr. Mathew George, Dr. Rajkumar Songa from the national/local organising committees.



Inaugural Address

The lamp lighting ceremony was led by the Chief Guest, Dr. S. Venkatesh, Director General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, along with other dignitaries on the dais. Dr. Venkatesh spoke on the health needs of the Indian population, highlighting the important role of Christian health professionals taking the lead in medical education and service toward the unreached populations, especially in areas requiring malaria and disaster relief. He noted the problems of health systems constrained by the lack of love and compassion, super-specialization and reductionism, antimicrobial resistance, climate change, outbreaks, and disaster. He also pointed out how faith plays an important role in providing a safe place, social structure, partnerships, and intentional strategies for health promotion. There is a need for wholistic care and community-based researchers and healthcare delivery through public-private partnerships,

emphasizing caring, team-based efforts, evidence, and informatics. He emphasized that the future doctors would be required to not only be competent clinicians but also good managers, qualified researchers, and advocates of promotive and preventive health care, that our whole lives would be testimonies to God's honor.

Bible Exposition

Each day of the congress included a scholarly Bible exposition by Rev. Charles Price (Canada) in the morning who emphasized the new covenant and the internalized, fulfilled law marked by transformation into Christ's likeness (2 Cor 3:17-18), and the "indwelling of the life of God in our own existence." In the evenings, an inspirational devotion led by Mr. Rajkumar Ramachandran (India) emphasized being a light to the nations through imitation of Christ and world-affecting personal holiness.



Plenary Sessions

There was one plenary session each day. Dr. Peter Saunders (UK) spoke on ethical challenges in healthcare, noting the global burden of disease, injustice toward the unborn (42% of all global deaths), and the challenge of facing the four prominent ethical drivers of society: autonomy “we want it,” personal pleasure “we need it,” technology “we can do it,” and moral relativism “why not?” He called for following in Christ’s footsteps, as “flawed masterpieces,” assuming responsibility as “delegated vice-rulers” to protect human dignity, speak truth no matter what the cost, uphold God’s design for human sexuality, bear one another’s burdens, and seek justice for the voiceless. Dr. David Stevens (USA) gave a call to “be bold” by maintaining the faith amidst strong secular humanist pressures by being willing to be mentored, to take risks, to learn from failures, to lead and mentor others, and to fully trust in God. Dr. Daleep Mukarji, OBE (UK) spoke on poverty (65% of the Indian population, and 1.5 billion globally in severe poverty), inequity, and discrimination, and Christ’s call to bring justice to the nations (Isaiah 42:1-7) and hope to the impoverished – looking at root causes, advocating for the poor (Prov 31:8-9), and healing through reconciled relationships. This requires Christian doctors who are professionally competent, spiritually alive, socially committed, and sensitive to context and culture.

Parallel and Breakout Sessions

There were a wide variety of excellent sessions (parallel workshops and breakout sessions). There were eight parallel workshops that were on Servant Leadership, Mentoring and Spiritual Formation, Bio-Ethics, Missions, Governance and Strategic thinking, Understanding World Views, Care for the Elderly, and Palliative Care. There were 18 breakout sessions that were designed around three themes: Mission and Engagement, Building People, and Program Design. These included surgical health care for Rohingya refugees, geriatric and palliative care capacity building, integrative mental health, transformational leadership, strategic HIV care, rethinking short-term missions, and a session on research and publishing by two of this journal’s editors.

Some time, during and after dinner, was set aside for networking and fellowship. There was a colorful and lively Graduates International Night, where the Youth Alive group presented a glimpse of India’s rich and colorful culture through fusion of Christian music and dance. Many countries came forward to represent their regions by presenting songs, dances, videos, and skits in their traditional attires, showcasing diverse cuisine, art, and crafts from various countries that delegates could enjoy. It was truly a time of beauty, friendship, and unity across cultures.

Praise and Worship

The two indigenous groups did a wonderful job of leading praise and worship on all the days of the congress: The *Shiloh Worship Band*, a group of medical and healthcare professionals (Alumni of Christian Medical College, Vellore) who were from various backgrounds but with one

heart to serve God through music. The ministry, *Sounds of the Nation* also sought to carry people on a heavenward quest through the medium of indigenous music. Team Uganda CMF included 6 multi-age vocalists who led African style worship, and the North East Choir, a group of 50 vocalists sang for the closing session.



Closing session

The congress concluded as Rev. Roger Gaikwad, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in India, conducted the Holy Communion Service using a meaningful contemporary order of service and spoke about reflecting the life and work of the Lord Jesus as bearers of justice, light to the nations, promoters of

the message of freedom, reconciling servant healers, and transformational servant leaders – with a character of self-emptying, humility, and attention to mentoring new generations of Christ-followers. The quadrennial ICMDA congress is looking forward with excitement to reconvene in 2022 in Tanzania.



Competing Interests: None declared.

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