



Ladakh Heart Foundation

Newsletter May 2002 - August 2003



The past year has been a very busy one for the Ladakh Heart Foundation. We have been continuing and extending our activities all over Ladakh, trying to prevent and cure all forms of heart disease, while also concerning ourselves with the general health of the local population, Our efforts can be broken down into four main areas-

- Primary preventative medicine, mainly in the form of lectures and seminars
- Village clinics in out-lying regions
- The maintenance of a register of all patients in the region, and the continued monitoring of their conditions
- Surgery and diagnostic clinics

In the meantime, the LHF has been working hard to press ahead on the construction of the new hospital. What follows is a little more detail on the advances that have been made.



Lecture Programmes

The lectures are all given by Dr. Norboo, and are designed to educate Ladakh about the ten impending diseases of the new millennium. These are:

1. Hypertension
2. High cholesterol
3. Smoking
4. Obesity, leading to diabetes
5. Diet (prevention of cardiovascular disease and cancer)
6. Heart Attack
7. Sexually transmitted disease, HIV and AIDS
8. Environmental and occupational health disease
9. Accident prevention
10. Mental health

As Ladakh rapidly develops and changes economically and culturally, it is vital that the population understands and can make steps to address these new issues- hypertension is exceptionally common due to the salty diet and local butter tea, and Ladakh has the lowest age of onset of stomach cancer in the world. The information is tailored for the cultural background in which it is to be received.

Dr. Norboo and other members of the Foundation travel to the villages with the generator and projection equipment of the Ladakh Heart Foundation, where lectures are given in halls, schools, and even outdoor areas at night. The attendance, and attention, at lectures is always high, and the information is always very well received. Whenever possible, the lectures are also given before any clinics, so that diagnoses, blood pressure measurements, and lifestyle advice is better understood. The feedback and questions from villagers is always positive, and lectures often stimulate many more questions. Over the past year, around 6400 children, adults, teacher, and health professionals have heard these lectures.

A list of campaigns can be found at the back of the newsletter.

International Seminars

In November 2002, Dr. Norboo and Lama Chogyal were invited by the Tokyo Woman Medical University to give a series of presentations upon aspects of high altitude disease, at the 3rd International Symposium on Chronobiology.

Village Clinics

Over the course of the past year, approximately 750 patients have been seen in village clinics, as part of the out-reach programme. We have been able to dispense free medicines for a very wide variety of ailments, and feel that a large impact can be made on each individual's quality of life, through schemes such as these. The clinics are always very popular.

Patient Register

The maintenance of the patient register is an on-going project. At present we are maintaining a database of 127 patients suffering from Rheumatic Heart Disease, which is important both for the monitoring of the condition of these individuals, and as a resource for research into the condition.

Fortunately, over the past year there have been only three new cases of rheumatic heart disease, and this is a reduction that we have tried to assist through the provision of free Penidure (Benzopenicillin) injections at hospitals, clinics and village centres for those with symptoms that are suggestive of a streptococcal throat infection. These injections were kindly donated by Casa del Tibet. Though this steady reduction in cases is welcome, we are aiming for a total eradication of new cases over the next few years, through continuing increased awareness, and the availability of suitable medicines.

We also maintain registers of patients with other conditions, monitoring 82 individuals with Congenital Heart Disease, 22 individuals with serious Arrhythmias, and 20 cases of Coronary Artery Disease.

We are also in the process of developing further registers, allowing us to help those with neurological problems, such as those that follow a stroke, as we feel that this is intrinsically linked with heart disease, and therefore the aims of the Foundation.

Construction Site



The construction site is progressing steadily. From merely foundations this time last year, we have added the whole of the ground floor, constructed a well 170m deep to provide a reliable and clean water supply, and now have a connection to electricity and telephone. The army also gave a loan of a bulldozer, allowing the leveling of the rest of the site, while the forest department has pledged to plant approximately 1000 trees around the hospital.

We hope to complete the shell of the building by the end of the summer season, in one and a half months time, but this is very much dependent upon the resources available to



us.

Nine volunteers from Singapore, including two nuns, came to assist in the building of the site, and also in the clinics, earlier this year.

Heart Surgery

Over the past year, we have financially assisted 15 patients in the costs of their surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Studies (AIIMS) in Delhi. Lama Chogyal and Lama Lobzang have flown to Delhi to help with the admission of some of these patients. We continue to maintain a close relationship with the AIIMS Cardiology department, which ensures that patients are admitted immediately, without paying to stay in Delhi while on the waiting list. This is aided to a great degree by the clinics given each year by Professor Kumar (cardiovascular surgeon) and Dr. Mishra (cardiologist) from AIIMS at the government hospital in Leh, whose expenses are paid by the Ladakh Heart Foundation. Over the course of a few days, difficult diagnoses can be made, surgical need can be assessed, and surgical follow-up can be ensured- hundreds of patients are seen, removing the need of a costly journey to Delhi for many of them. Patients who do travel to Delhi pay only for supplies used in the operation, particularly the cost of the valve, while the services of the doctors and nurses and the hospital bed are free. Over the past ten years, many of the patients who have had to travel to Delhi have got to know Tsering Norboo Rafta, who has helped them with all the difficulties that Delhi can throw at a visitor. He is now working as a councillor representing the Nemo region in the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, and his services over the past decade have been indispensable.

Some of the patients require blood transfusions during surgery, and this is very kindly donated by some of the Ladakhi students, monks, and other Ladakhi residents in Delhi. The Ladakh Buddhist Vihara in Delhi also often supplies accommodation in Delhi at little or no cost.

This year, for the first time, Professor Kumar also performed six closures of a congenital heart disease condition known as a Patent Ductus Arteriosus. This initiative has not only saved the patients approximately Rs600,000 (\$12,000) combined, but has also allowed the training of surgeons in Leh to perform the procedure in the future. All



the patients, aged between 2yr and 12yr, are recovering well. This venture has been a great success, and next year it is hoped that mitral valvotomies (a procedure that can be of enormous benefit to sufferers of rheumatic heart disease) will be performed.

Individual Sponsorships

Heng Thomas, from Holland, has sponsored the surgery of two young children who required treatment in Delhi, one with a congenital heart lesion, and the other with rheumatic heart disease. Both children are now doing well- many thanks for his continued support.

Casa Del Tibet has also sponsored the surgery of a young boy from a very poor family who recently lost his father. The surgery should take place this winter, while Casa del Tibet is also sponsoring his education.

Other Projects

We are currently sponsoring the up bringing of four siblings who were all born blind. They are members of a Muslim family of five children from the remote village of Igoo, whose village leader contacted the Lama Chogyal about their troubles. The three daughters now attend a school for the blind in Delhi, while the son has remained in Ladakh, with help to cope with his disability. This is only possible through the donations from Singaporean groups and two ladies from the Muslim Women Alliance.

Four wheelchairs and other handicap aids have been donated at the Dalai Lama's request to children at the Tibetan Exiles' Handicap Centre in Deharadun.

The Ladakh Heart Foundation has also helped co-ordinate donations from Singaporean groups to nine nunneries and a school in Ladakh, and to four patients with suspected chronic mountain sickness, from the high altitude Tso Moriri region of Ladakh.

A support group has been set up in Geneva,
"Les Amis de Ladakh Heart Foundation"
1B Clos de Ladakh Fonderie,
CP 1272,
1227 Carouge,
Geneva, Switzerland

This group has kindly donated a vehicle, which has been vital for both the everyday running and the far-flung activities of the Foundation.

Campaigns

- 02/05/02 - Location: Ladakh Buddhist Association, Leh.
Series of lectures, attended around 1000 lamas and nuns, by Dr Norboo in co-operation with government health department. Topics covered included: hypertension, diabetes, obesity, diet, and stomach cancer.
- 18/05/02 - Location: Skurbuchan village.
Lecture attended by most of village population, on "ten impending diseases of the new millenium" (TIDNM).
- 31/05/02 - Location: SOS Tibetan Children's Village School, Choglamsar.
Lecture on all aspects of tobacco to entire school (around 800).
- 05/06/02 - Location: SSB military headquarters, Leh.
Lecture for 200 army officers and rank personnel on STDs, HIV and AIDS.
- 08/06/02 - Location: Sumur, Nubra.
Lecture for 150 students and villagers on TIDNM.
- 09/06/02 - Location: Tongstet, Nubra.
Village clinic with free medicines followed by lecture on TIDNM.
- 10/06/02 - Location: Diskit, Nubra.
Lecture for 250 students on TIDNM.
Evening lecture for 40 adults on TIDNM.
- 15/06/02 - Location: Lamdon Model Secondary School, Leh.

Debate on anti-tobacco campaign followed by tobacco lecture with all pupils (around 300).

- 24/06/02 - Location: Chief Medical Officer's Office, Leh.
Education programme on TIDNM for the 5 Block Medical Officers and 13 other medical officers. 5 training packs distributed.
- 09/12/02 - Ladakh Ecological Group Hall, Leh.
Lecture to 30 Muslim women on lifestyle-related diseases.
- 16/12/02 - Ladakh Ecological Group Training Centre, Leh.
Lecture on environmental and occupational health problems to 25 teachers.
- Jan 2003 - Location: District Institution of Education and Training, Leh.
2 Lectures for 250 teachers each on the theme of TIDNM.
- Feb 2003- Location: District Institution of Education and Training, Leh.
A further 4 lectures were requested and delivered each for 250 teachers.
- 27/02/03 - Location: Sonam Norboo Memorial Hospital, Leh.
Lecture for 80 paramedical trainees on a theme of TIDNM.
Education on blood pressure measurement, record keeping and body mass index calculation.
- 03/03/03 - Location: CMO's Office, Leh.
Lecture to 20 multi-purpose workers on TIDNM.
- 29/03/03 - Location: Auditorium Hall, Leh.
Lecture to members of Women's' Alliance and paramedical staff on TIDNM.
- 03/04/03 - Location: Government High School, Nimo
Lecture to villagers and students on tobacco and TIDNM.
- 07/04/03 - Location: SOS TCV School, Choglamsar.
Lecture to 800 students on TIDNM.
- 15/04/03 - Location: Shara village.
Lecture to 300 villagers on TIDNM followed by clinic attended by 40 patients with free medicines.
- 21/04/03 - Location: Bema village.

- Epidemiological study on 148 subjects, blood sampled for sugar and serum cholesterol. 2 found to have impaired glucose tolerance.
- 22 - 24/04/03- Location: Dha, Sanjak, Dartsik, Garkon village.
Village clinics for over 230 patients in total with free medicines.
- 12/05/03 - Location: Islamia Public School, Leh.
Lecture to 50 students and all teachers on tobacco.
- 14/05/03 - Location: Islamia Public School, Leh.
Lecture to 50 students on STDs, HIV and AIDS and aspects of TIDNM.
- 21/05/03 - Location: Government Higher Secondary School, Leh.
Donation of "No-Smoking" sign by Ladakh Heart Foundation followed by lecture on tobacco.
- 19/06/03 - Location: Chokhang Lecture Hall, Leh.
Lecture to 50 students on tobacco and alcohol.
- 15 - 17/06/03- Location: Korzok, Tsomoriri.
Village clinic for 80 patients with free medicines.
- 23 - 24/08/03- Location: Gya, Rumtse villages.
Lecture for 150 villagers on hypertension and stomach cancer followed by clinic for 210 patients (in association with army medical corps).
- 30/08/03 - Location: Girl's Middle School, Leh
Lecture for 100 pupils and teachers on tobacco
- 9/09/03 - Location: Middle School, Saboo
Lecture for 80 teachers and pupils on TIDNM