

Press release – 28th February, 2018

Medical mission changes lives in India



Patients in one of the poorest areas of India can look forward to better, pain-free lives following a visit by a volunteer medical team, led by staff from South Tyneside District Hospital.

The group of about 20, mainly from North East Foundation Trusts – South Tyneside, City Hospitals Sunderland, QE Gateshead, County Durham and Darlington, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne Hospitals - but also from elsewhere in the country, gave up their own time to perform more than 100 life-changing procedures during an intensive, six-day period at Walawalkar Hospital in Dervan, on India's West coast. The specialities involved included: urology; plastic, orthopaedic, eye and general surgery; gynaecology; radiology; anaesthetics; physiotherapy, and acute pain management.

This was the 13th time that the annual trip had been arranged through the SVJC Trust charity. Dr Sanjay Deshpande, Consultant Anaesthetist at South Tyneside District Hospital, originally had the idea for the medical mission after visiting Walawalkar whilst on a family holiday to India in 2005 and being impressed by the dedication and commitment of the staff despite limited resources.

He said: “It is sometimes easy to forget how fortunate we are to have the NHS. It is an amazing experience for us to go to Walawalkar Hospital and, through what would be considered in this country as relatively simple operations, be able to help people whose quality of life would be significantly reduced if they were left untreated. In addition, we have been able to help the hospital to develop its staff and facilities and it is now much better equipped to serve the community.

“Having the opportunity to work in a developing country also benefits the NHS. Being in a different environment provides new challenges and a fresh perspective on healthcare. It gives staff greater appreciation of the roles of their clinical and non-clinical colleagues and sharpens the focus on the importance of basic safety.”

Supporting the clinical work of the doctors and nurses in India were staff from South Tyneside District Hospital's biomedical engineering department, who helped to repair and maintain Walawalkar's essential medical equipment.

Money is raised throughout each year to cover the cost of travel and shipping of equipment for the medical mission. Anyone interested in making a contribution, or in donating books, clothing and equipment, can contact Dr Deshpande on 0191 2024046. To find out more about the SVJC Trust go to www.svjctrust.co.uk

Ends

Photo caption: Some of the volunteers on a previous visit to India, including Dr Sanjay Deshpande (seated, second from the left)

Issued by **Kay Jordan**

For press enquiries on this release, contact **0191 404 1128** or email

kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk