

PRESS RELEASE – 21 January 2019

South Tyneside-led medical team on mercy mission to India



A volunteer team from the region, led by staff from South Tyneside District Hospital, will set out this week on their annual mission to bring much needed medical help to a community in one of the poorest areas of India.

This will be the 14th visit to Walawalkar Hospital in Dervan, on India's West coast. The group of about 20 will be made up mainly of staff from North East NHS Foundation Trusts - South Tyneside and its partner City Hospitals Sunderland, QE Gateshead, County Durham and Darlington, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne Hospitals - as well as some from elsewhere in the country.

In the course of one week, they will perform procedures which will improve the lives of more than 100 people, with the specialities involved including Urology, Plastic Surgery, Orthopaedic Surgery, Eye Surgery, General Surgery, Gynaecology, Radiology, Anaesthetics, Physiotherapy, and Acute Pain Management.

Biomedical engineering staff from South Tyneside District Hospital will also be there to support the clinical work of the doctors and nurses by repairing and maintaining Walawalkar's essential medical equipment.

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. The annual trip is arranged through the SVJC Trust charity, with the volunteers giving their time for free.

Dr Deshpande said: “Our reward is seeing the impact we have on people’s lives through what would, in this country, often be seen as relatively simple operations. The results are literally life-changing, through everything from enabling people to see and to walk unaided, to being pain-free. An important part of the trip is also providing health education to the community and support to the hospital to develop its staff and facilities.”

Participants in the mission say being in a different environment also provides new challenges and a fresh perspective on healthcare, giving them greater appreciation of the roles of their clinical and non-clinical colleagues and sharpening the focus on the importance of basic safety.

Money is raised throughout each year to cover the cost of travel and shipping of equipment. Anyone interested in making a contribution, or in donating books, clothing and equipment, can contact Dr Deshpande on 0191 2024046 or Dr Lance Cope on 0191 4041000. To find out more about the SVJC Trust go to www.svjctrust.co.uk

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Photo caption: Some of the volunteers pictured on a previous visit to Walawalkar Hospital

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