

ACTION-PACKED MEDICAL MISSION –

Battling Leprosy, COVID-Delta & Tropical Nasties in Post-Monsoon Nepal

October 2021

Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital & Services Centre (LLHSC), Nepal Leprosy Trust (NLT)

From LLHSC's entire grateful team - &
Dr Graeme Clugston, Medical Director & Meena Clugston, Nursing Advisor

Facebook: www.facebook.com/nepal.leprosy Website: www.nepal-leprosy.com

Dear Church family and friends –

Greetings, and Hooray! - The monsoon is over at last (well, almost). *Everyone here sends you warmest greetings!*

The LLHSC-Team (including us) has been bashing onwards day by day - despite monsoon, heat, monkeys, mosquitoes and multitudes of patients - with exciting busy demanding front-line mission work here at Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital – one of the world's busiest leprosy hospitals. It's a non-stop struggle in the daily battle against leprosy, COVID-Delta, plus a wide range of other **tropical nasties (see below)** ... you wouldn't believe without seeing!



(a) Supporting needy remote schools



(b) The LLHSC Nursing team – sends you warmest greetings and thanks

During the monsoon and in the post-monsoon period (June - October), patient-numbers rise for both hospital and community work. Normally at this time of year we treat about 900 patients each day - in non-COVID-pandemic year. But COVID (it's all Delta strain here) and COVID-lockdowns have reduced our outpatient numbers to about 500 patients daily.... That's still very busy. But *Hey!*.... we all wear masks!



Hot, humid wet days and night - contaminated water, flooding, water-borne diseases, landslides, mosquitoes, food shortage and malnutrition in places, and unsanitary living conditions in the villages around.

So we diagnose and treat not only leprosy and COVID – *plus* skin diseases, typhoid, cholera, hepatitis, diarrhoeal diseases, respiratory infections, urinary tract infections, mosquito-borne diseases – malaria, filariasis, dengue, Japanese encephalitis - these all increase around monsoon time. Can you imagine what an ultra-busy time this makes for us all, especially our 5 doctors and 15 nurses?

Busy busy busy busy busy Outpatient clinics ... every day!

BUT NOW ... apart from occasional downpours of **buckets of rain**, and **annoying hordes of hungry monkeys (... and 2 Oh yep - and hungry mosquitoes) The monsoon is over at last... Hooray!**



(a) Occasional buckets of rain



(b) Hordes of hungry monkeys

May I just remind you where we are - The LLHSC-hospital is situated in south-eastern Nepal, in the hot flat Terai region of Nepal, close to the border of Bihar, India. More than 20% of our patients come across the border from India. Can you make it out on the map below? In Winter, when the sky is clear, we can see Mount Everest from our hospital water-tower. This map also shows Kalika School up in the Sindhuli mountains. It's a very poor area. We have been supporting the primary school-age children (4-10 years) there for 4 years. We have just finished building a new school there ... to replace their old stone one which was badly irreparably damaged by the 2015 earthquakes. We opened it 2 days ago (Monday 11 October) – see further below. I'll send you a little mini-newsletter with pictures next week.



So... the rice planting is finished, the flooding has subsided, landslides are being cleared, and the monsoon hardships are coming to an end – fine weather is returning, and we now occasionally get glimpses of the nearby Himalayas to the north.



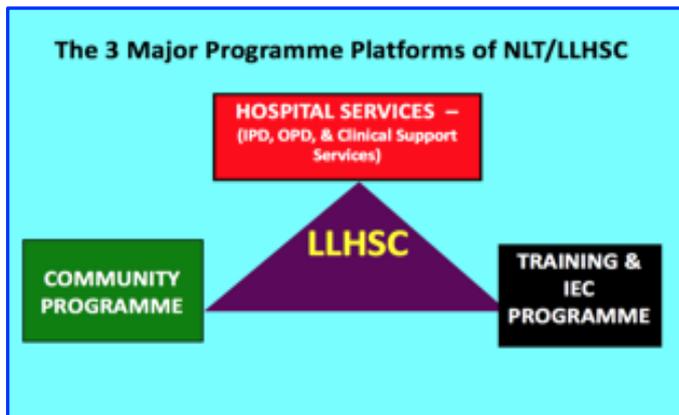


Landslides less frequent and being cleared



Monsoonal floodwaters subsiding...

You'll possibly remember the three major programme platforms of LLHSC –



- **Hospital Services** - including Inpatient care for hospitalised patients, Outpatient daily consultation services, and Diagnostic Support such as Laboratory, X-Ray, Ultrasound and Pharmacy.
- **Community Outreach Programme** – with satellite clinics, community development work, water and sanitation projects, and Self-Help Groups with some 2,300 beneficiaries.
- **Training and Information/Education Programme** - running training courses and workshop for Government Health workers, doctors and nurses, teachers, international students and interns, and community development groups.

And here (below) are LLHSC's fabulous staff-members. LLHSC has 121 staff members in total (although they are not all here in the pic below). But it's these heroes and heroines who make LLHSC run smoothly and successfully with increasing patient numbers year by year (in non-pandemic times) – one of the world's busiest leprosy hospitals ...



There's a larger happy version at end of Newsletter

A wee glimpse of the daily clinical life at Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital – INPATIENTS, OUTPATIENTS AND DIAGNOSTICS



This is septic surgery – where every day some 10-15 inpatients with nasty infected leprosy ulcers have their wounds debrided and treated. (I won't show you the details).

Patients suffering from leprosy have often lost all feeling in their hands and feet and eyes ... ulcers may then invade, erode and destroy their feet bones or hand bones, or destroy their eyes before they come for treatment.

They then may lose their toes and feet or fingers and hands....and go blind



This is reconstructive surgery – it can transform the lives of leprosy patients. It is fine microscopic surgery involving tendon transplants. With reconstructed hands or feet, leprosy disability can be prevented, cured and function restored



These 4 leprosy-affected young ladies are all inpatients here at the moment. All have needed surgery for leprosy affected limbs. (From L-R) Neelam has had left leg amputation and prosthesis (see below) , Shila and Ritu have had hand reconstructive surgery a few days ago, and Shova has needed surgery on both hand and feet. They are very happy at LLHSC where there is no leprosy-stigma.



(a) A very young surgical patient; (b) Neelam 19 - you can see her below-knee left prosthesis; her right foot is now in trouble – she is now in our hospital as we try to rescue her right foot



Phulo Devi 70 is in hospital now – admitted in awful condition - she has leprosy-affected deformed feet, hands, face and eyes – almost blind. You can see she has had a Symes partial amputation of her right foot. She is a lonely aged disabled widow. Her husband and children have all died and she had no-one to care for her. We have cured her foot ulcers over the past 4 weeks and 2 days ago she had her left eye cataract removed and replaced with a new introcular lens – she is soooo thrilled she can see again!



PhulMaya Tamang 67 – is not a leprosy patient, but has open pulmonary tuberculosis. This is very prevalent here.

Especially difficult to treat is the multi-drug resistant TB (MDT-TB). It's a killer disease and needs special drugs to cure it.



Diagnostics Support services (Laboratory, X-Ray, Ultrasound) provide regular daily essential diagnostics. (a) here our super-duper Siemens Ultrasound machine “Janet” provides antenatal scanning services... and (b) the result is usually a healthy normal delivery of a healthy baby.



The Hospital Laboratory Service is always busy. Skin smears for suspected leprosy patients, Lateral flow COVID testing done daily on COVID-suspect cases.

Plus, a busy range of haematology, clinical chemistry, immunoassays, microscopy and bacteriology tests.

Also recently established, with great support from Indiana University School of Medicine, LLHSC’s dermatohistopathology service. This enables us to take biopsies, process them, examine them microscopically for a definitive diagnosis – and send them to an overseas expert if needed.



(a) This is a plate of nutrient agar, with bacterial colonies (white dots) cultured on it. These can be tested against antibiotic discs to show to which antibiotics the bacteria are most sensitive. (b) Ravi – our Lab-in-charge – teaching our nurses



(a) A seemingly never-ending line of patient awaiting a consultation - but Hey! .. they are all wearing masks. (b) Dr Krishna running a clinic

Nepal Leprosy Trust/Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital & Services centre (NLT/LLHSC) is a Christian Mission hospital, and our Christian faith is the main driving force behind the vision, mission, enthusiasm and energy of LLHSC's work. We strive strenuously to unite belief and behaviour, faith and action, endeavouring to be (in Jesus's words) ...

- **SALT of the earth:** Seeking & serving with compassion the leprosy-affected & other, poor, sick, marginalised.
- **LIGHT of the world:** Shining forth the Gospel of love & salvation – in word and action.

Every morning at 8.15 am, we try to “Shine the Light” – beginning each day with 15-20 minutes of devotions – shared with patients, doctors, nurses – in our Children’s Unit. The nurses take it in turns to lead this each day. Many of our patients come if they can, even though most are Hindu. They enjoy joining in the singing and clapping, listening to the Bible readings and a short explanation of the reading by the leading nurse, and joining in the prayers finishing with the Lord’s Prayer in Nepali. (We still have to be wise and careful as there is some anti-Christian hostility by extreme Hindu groups in this region of Nepal).



Morning devotions – nurse led – start each day - songs, a bible reading, and a prayer finishing with the Lord’s prayer (all in Nepali of course)



Happiness! - getting a boxload of new Nepali Bibles and Hymnbooks. The Bible is open at Psalm 47 “Clap your hands, all you nations...”



NEW WHEELCHAIRS AND EQUIPMENT

9

We have just received our long-standing order of much needed new wheelchairs, bedside lockers and other hospital equipment, with funds from generous churches, a medical mission organization, and loving friends. It's been a struggle to get any equipment here over the last two years because of COVID lockdown and transport and clearance difficulties at the Indian border.



Pretty totally HORRIBLE condition of disintegrating wheelchairs (would you really sit in one of them?) ... and rusty bedside lockers.



It took 2 years to get them across the border them – but HEY! ... we are so thrilled at these beautiful new wheelchairs (13 of them) and 25 new bedside lockers – arrived 3 weeks ago.



Also ordered 2 years ago... we also just got a new Operating Room light for our Obstetric Delivery Room. No more baby-deliveries in the dark or by torchlight!

KALIKA SCHOOL – in High Remote Sindhuli Mountains

Two days ago, we went up into the remote high Sindhuli mountains to (a) open a new school we have been building following the massive earthquakes here, and (b) run a health clinic we run each year for the children (and parents of course). Also on the lookout for leprosy. The roads and tracks there are mind-blowingly fearfully rough and precipitous. We have to use our old high-base Landrovers to get up there.

They had never seen a doctor up there before our first visit 4 years ago, and never seen a “whitey” up there ever. Here are a few glimpses...



(a) Horrendously rough mountain roads/tracks. (b) Can you see the new school?... its painted blue and red, perched on the ridge below. It's quite a difficult walk and climb to get there, from where we have to leave the Landrover, especially carrying lots of supplies for the children



(a) Dr Krishna examines and treats all the children (and parents and other adults who want a checkup)

(b) Staff-Nurse Panina dispenses the medicines

(c) Meena and Dr Graeme do initial examination, weight-for-age charting, history ..



After the clinic is over, all the children get a warm new anorak, sandals, schoolbags containing note books, colouring books coloured pencils, soap, facewisher, toothbrush and toothpaste and more...

I'll send you a little Supplement Newsletter next week with more spectacular views...

There is so much more to tell you... but this Newsletter would be too long. There is lots going on in the LLHSC **Community Outreach Program**, and in the busy **Training Program**, especially right now when COVID-lockdown restrictions and fears are easing. Next time.

Funding of Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital & Services Centre (LLHSC)

LLHSC provides all services to leprosy patients free of cost, and for non-leprosy patients charges are very low or free for very poor needy patients, depending on what they can afford.

LLHSC is one of the world's busiest leprosy hospitals and by far the busiest in Nepal. Province-2 where LLHSC is situated next to the Indian Border has some 43% of all new cases of leprosy in Nepal. LLHSC is a key vital part of Nepal's National Leprosy Programme. LLHSC gets no funds from the Nepal Government, but manages to generate some 49% of its funding needs from local earnings - clinical support services, (pharmacy, laboratory, X-Ray etc, inpatient and outpatient services, and accommodation for trainees and interns). The rest is from donations. LLHSC's total annual budget covering all services, huge patient numbers, free leprosy services, and 121 staff, is US\$ 1.14 million.

Rising to Meet The Challenge Of The Future Expanding the scope and quality of Services

One of the main challenges of the future is to increase LLHSC's self-sufficiency – whilst keeping leprosy as the central focus of LLHSC's work, to also carefully increase the scope and quality of services offered to the huge numbers of non-leprosy patients – through developing specialist services in such areas as dermatology, children's and women's health, orthopedics etc. This makes sense when one considers the huge increasing numbers of patients.

Here are 12 of LLHSC's main priority needs:

- Funds for good quality hospital treatment of leprosy sufferers – especially children and women with severe leprosy complication – diagnosis, hospital inpatient care & treatment, medicines, reconstructive surgery;
- Urgently needed building of a Tuberculosis Clinic (DOTS – Directly Observed Therapy) - away from main hospital building because it is so infectious – for multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (\$ 30,000).
- Funds for a portable X-Ray machine (\$ 16,000)
- Obstetric delivery table – our current one is old and 2nd-hand. (\$ 4,200)
- A basic anaesthetic machine (\$ 9,900)
- Equipping the LLHSC Physiotherapy department for leprosy care (\$ 7,000)
- Scholarship-support for children with leprosy, and for children of leprosy-affected and other poor families
- Funding to support leprosy affected people in the community – for house renovation, well-digging, training in income generating skills, economic support for rehabilitating very poor leprosy-affected people.
- Support for staff salaries –(always so hard to raise funds for) – LLHSC's nurses, doctors, health workers are very committed – most salary levels at LLHSC are only half or three quarters of equivalent posts in other mission hospitals or Government hospitals);
- Volunteer doctors and nurses and health technicians.
- Training courses (6-12 months) for staff in areas such as ultrasound and X-Ray use and interpretation, laboratory techniques, practical anaesthetics, dermatology, reconstructive surgery, physiotherapy;
- Short training visits by professional experts coming to LLHSC, in these and other specialist areas - surgery, orthopaedics, paediatrics, women's health, diabetes etc;

LLHSC serves huge numbers of poor, sick and needy patients. When the COVID pandemic is over, patient numbers will rapidly return to well over 100,000 patient visits each year including some 12,000 leprosy patients and over 20,000 sick children. LLHSC reaches out compassionately with free or low-cost services to the poor and needy, the vulnerable and marginalised population groups. It supports and facilitates 112 Self Help Groups across Districts in Province-2. All three of LLHSC's programme areas – Hospital Services, Community Outreach, and the Training programme – strive to meet to the enormous challenges ahead, to help conquer and eliminate leprosy and other diseases of poverty, and help meet the health, faith, and development needs of the families, communities and populations of this very poor region of Nepal.

**Please help in any way you can. Encouragement, prayers, funds, visits, love.
Thankyou and warmest wishes from all the NLT/LLHSC-Team here. God bless!**



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*Forth in your name, O Lord, we go
 our daily labour to pursue;
 you, Lord, alone we long to know
 in all we think or speak or do.*

*The task your wisdom has assigned
 here let us cheerfully fulfil;
 in all our work your presence find
 and prove your good and perfect will.*

Charles Wesley

How to support Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital?

<http://www.nepal-leprosy.com/support-us.html>