

'Marvelous things': A health-care exchange in India

a release of Mennonite Mission Health Association

The Mennonite church in India continues to grow and thrive. So observes David Wiebe, M.D., Kearney, Neb., a longtime sustaining member of MMA who spent nearly a month in India recently.

"I came away this time more appreciative of the strength of the India church and [Mennonite Brethren] conference than ever before," Wiebe says. "They are proud to be Christians, to be Mennonite Brethren and Anabaptist in spite of opposition from various quarters.

"God has done marvelous things in the church in Andhra Pradesh," Wiebe concludes, "and I for one expect to see more."

Wiebe, a veteran missionary medical worker, was reporting to the Mennonite Mission Health Association (MMHA). He was in India from Feb. 10-March 6 as part of the Health Care Professional Visits Program sponsored by MMHA and Mennonite Brethren Medical Centre of Jadcherla, India.

In addition to participating in patient consults, Wiebe, as vice president of MMHA, was evaluating further possibilities of collaboration with the health-care ministries of the Mennonite Brethren Conference of India.

Wiebe observed "huge changes in India and particularly in Andhra [province] and more so in Hyderabad. There is a great deal of construction all the way to Jadcherla, with a new divided highway.. Cell phones are everywhere—it's said even the beggars have them.

"The disparity between rich and poor is more striking but the abject poverty seen in the past is not apparent," Wiebe continues. "The rising middle class certainly is

apparent. Disparity in health care is obvious. I saw patients who had had very successful knee replacements, but I also saw a three-year-old child with a 90-degree deformity from a fractured femur, which had occurred six months earlier."

The planned medical school associated with the Mennonite Brethren Medical Centre is both exciting and challenging, Wiebe says. He found general support for the concept of having a medical school at Jadcherla but also recognized the tremendous investment that will be required. Dr. PB Arnold, medical superintendent for Jadcherla and moderator of the MB Conference of India, noted several areas of potential collaboration with MMHA, including donation of recent medical journals and textbooks and arrangements for visiting consultants from North America.

Mennonite Mission Health Association (for more information, see the Web site at www.mennonitemha.org) was created to assist in the funding, development and ongoing operational support of health-care facilities and organizations in under-served regions of the developing world. Currently, MMHA has projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as in India.

MMHA's purpose includes raising funds for both capital development and operational support of qualifying institutions and organizations; providing management and health-care consulting services to the chosen projects; and supporting the projects with itinerant development, management and health-care professional human resources as needed, *-from a report by Glen Miller for MMHA*