

COLLEGE MOTTO AWARD CITATION 2024

Dr. Ajay Chaitanya Raju (MBBS batch of 1995)

Dr. Ajay C Raju started his journey in medicine joining CMC Vellore in 1995. Following his under-graduation in 2001, he worked in the CSI Basel Mission Hospital in Gadag and his experiences there inspired him to become a surgeon, to fulfill the lack of one. He came back to train in MS in General Surgery between 2003-06. The chance discovery of a letter by Ida Scudder (dated in 1930's) written to the hospital, only fired his passion and cemented his resolve of going back to this poor district in Karnataka, instead of Bangalore city, his hometown.

Ajay married Savita in 2005 and they returned to Gadag in 2006 upon completion of his PG, where Ameya was born in 2007. The couple jumped into the thick of work and soon realized the need to improve and change things. From the open surgeries and limited resources, Ajay rallied to introduce laparoscopic surgeries in 2007 and soon by 2009, in collaboration with his OBG colleagues expanded the services to laparoscopic Gynaecology. In 2011, the surgical load had increased, and the OT complex was expanded and 3 new OT's were built. Backed by an ICU with ventilators, complex cases could now be taken up.

Ajay went on to train in all that was required for the community and the Hospital – Endoscopy, Urology, Intensive Care, and many other specialties in the years to come. Understanding the need for a physician, Savita took on the calling and trained to be a physician at the Baptist Hospital, Bangalore in General Medicine. The 3 years that ensued while she was training in Bangalore were the most trying – Ameya in Belgaum, Ajay in Gadag and Savita in Bangalore. But they bore this trial keeping the greater interests of the Institution and the needs of the people they were called to serve. Savita returned as a consultant in 2011 and since 2019, has been the sole physician, running the medicine department, managing the OPD, wards, ICU/ HDU & emergency services – 24*7, 365 days.

Ajay also understood he had to lead from the front and trained to be an effective leader by completing his PG diploma in Hospital Administration in 2010. He played a major role in expansion of the Hospital, with new infrastructure being added between 2009 and 2013. This included a private wing, general ward and ICUs. The hospital expanded from 50 to 130 beds. The hospital was soon self-sustaining and extended their services and income to infrastructure developments for orphanages and church buildings of the Diocese. Ajay took over as the Medical Superintendent in 2019 and focused on offering quality healthcare at affordable costs.

In 2020, the hospital achieved the NABH entry level accreditation, which enabled them to enrol in Govt schemes and offer private health insurance. The hospital team took on the challenge posed by the COVID pandemic by serving all the patients who came to them for care, as the single largest private healthcare facility in the district. The pandemic times also highlighted their need to upgrade their services and offer super speciality care. The hospital was modernized by upgrading the OTs, ICUs, and a new CT scan was purchased. A Cathlab unit was established in 2022. All this was achieved without any external funding. Ajay roped in surgical specialists as visiting consultants, to provide Neurosurgical, orthopedic joint replacements,

paediatric surgical and urological service apart from general surgery, OBG and general orthopaedics; while Savita supported the medical super-specialist care for Cardiology, Nephrology and Gastroenterology.

The hospital was awarded the best performing hospital in Gadag district in implementing the Ayushman Bharath scheme by the Government of Karnataka for 2 years – 2022 & 2024. This empowered the hospital to offer their super speciality services to more people who could not afford the treatment earlier.

Ajay also saw the need for starting educational programs in the hospital. They started the General Duty Assistant Skill Program in 2021, which is recognised by Health Sector Skill Council of India. In 2022, they started DNB diploma programs in Family Medicine & Paediatrics recognised by the NBE, New Delhi. In 2024, they established a BSc Nursing College, recognised by Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Bangalore.

Ajay has also been actively involved with the Christian community in Gadag. He is a church elder and also a member of the various committees of CSI Karnataka Northern Diocese. These responsibilities and relationships developed over the years have kept relations between the hospital and the church harmonious. Along with being medical superintendent, he also manages two orphanages in Gadag, coming under the diocese.

He is a loved faculty and travels to present at national conferences. In 2021, his surgical work was recognised by our Alma mater, who bestowed the Dr. Emmanuel Sunder Raj memorial award for exemplary service in the missions by a surgeon.

Ajay and his family, have committed their lives to be a beacon of Christ's love to all in the Gadag district and continue to embody the motto of his Alma Mater - Not to be served, but to serve!!