

# [Health-india] NEWS: No dreary white walls at Indian cancer centre

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No dreary white walls at Indian cancer centre=09=09 (FEATURE)

By Chitra Narayanan, Indo-Asian News Service

Kozhikode, July 7 (IANS) White walls, crowded waiting rooms, aseptic corridors with the smell of disinfectants and decay hanging in the air -- those are the images commonly associated with hospitals.

Now coming up in Kozhikode, a bustling town in Kerala on the southern coast of India, is a unique centre that is set to change the depressing image of hospitals.

The Pain and Palliative Inpatient Centre at the Calicut (Kozhikode) Medical College campus, expected to be ready by December 2003, will house cancer patients and those suffering from chronic pain.

This aesthetically designed ethnic-looking medical centre will use bright cheerful colours, have large windows with picturesque views and be dotted with beautiful sculptures and paintings for patients to gaze at.

The idea is to make the last days of the patients for whom death is inevitable as painless as possible and to alleviate their suffering.

And, no, the building is not being created for the rich and well heeled. Instead, the aim is to provide palliative care free of cost to the poor and needy, suffering from advanced cancer.

Although palliative centres, which look after the physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs of both the patients and their families during the illness and also bereavement, are an old concept in the West, in India they are few and far between.

The new centre is being set up by the Pain and Palliative Care Society and being supervised by two doctors, Sureshkumar and M.R. Rajagopal, who is a professor of Anesthesiology at the Calicut Medical College.

Architect Benny Kuriakose, who is designing the centre, says a great deal of care is being lavished on the design and aesthetics of the building where patients will be housed.

Kuriakose, who has trained under the well-known architect Laurie Baker, describes how each little detail of the new centre has been meticulously planned after consultations with the doctor.

For instance, the waiting area is being designed in such a way that patients can lie down and, if need be, attended to right there by the doctor. The centre will have eight single rooms and 48 dormitories.

The dormitories will be shaped in such a way that each patient has a little private corner and a window to view out, and wheelchairs are accessible ready-at-hand.

Indoor, the architect is not only looking at the decor but also the lighting to provide the best possible ambience. No harsh glares that will hurt the patients.

Helping Kuriakose coordinate the colour scheme and select suitable materials is Visalakshi Ramaswamy, well known Chennai-based cultural connoisseur and one of the prime movers of the revival of Chettinad arts and crafts.

Says Kuriakose: "We are trying out new ideas such as a courtyard, a quiet room where patients can meditate, a canteen where visitors can leave their children, as also for the kids of the hospital staff."

Also, a separate service entry is being created for ambulances, and dead bodies will also be taken out through the route. Near there, a large area will be specially created where relatives of the departed can crowd around and mourn the loss.

And since nursing those who have no hope is a painstaking task, two peaceful sanctuaries are being provided for the doctors and nursing attendants, where they can unwind and ease their tensions.

The Pain and Palliative Care Society of India is a charitable trust that receives aid from Cancer Relief India, Global Cancer Concern and Sir Ratan Tata Trust apart from donations from several patients.

The new in-patient centre is being supported by the Bruce Davis Charitable Trust of Britain. Kuriakose, who is clearly touched by the commitment of the doctors here, is not charging a penny for the architectural design.

Each year about one million new cancer cases are detected in India. About 80 percent of them are detected at an advanced stage, and a complete cure is beyond reach.

--Indo-Asian News Service

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