



## MESSENGERS OF PEACE

Well before the first patients were admitted, CMC Vellore was preparing for the pandemic. The first thing we did was to appraise ourselves about COVID-19. We set up the Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) wards, Intensive Care Units (ICUs) with isolation facilities and the Triage Fever Clinic. We worked together with different departments, including Pulmonary Medicine, Infectious Disease, Geriatrics, Obstetrics, Pediatrics and Speciality Medicine departments. This collaborative effort has enriched our work and relationships.

The pandemic has brought to light many ethical issues. **The care of COVID-19 patients is impinging on the cardinal principles of medical ethics, patient autonomy, justice, non-maleficence and confidentiality.** A patient presenting with a severe respiratory infection does not have an option to decide regarding testing or admission. As a public health requirement, the test reports have to be reported to the government authorities. When confidentiality is not maintained, the patient may be identified, family labelled, leading to further stigmatization and discrimination by society. We, as health providers, are grappling with the fact that clinical medicine and public health are coming close together.

How does the ethos of CMC help us address the challenges of COVID-19? For 120 years, CMC has been providing compassionate care to the best of our ability, without counting the cost. **We see ourselves not only as medical professionals but also as messengers of peace.** Our role is to offer high-quality care based on scientific evidence, to provide compassionate care and protect patient rights. We have to think clearly, act with courage and sensitivity.

We support our patient's family who are isolated at home. It is extremely stressful for them, not being with their loved ones when they are sick or dying. We communicate with them by phone. In these few minutes, we reassure them, give them hope and provide an accurate clinical picture.



*Dr. Anand*