

# healthcare SUNDAY

## Heroes in healthcare

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**NEW**

## Overseas Heroes in Healthcare

Christians have been taking the lead in issues in international health for a very long time, and in more recent history, many of the pioneers of healthcare in developing nations have been missionary doctors and nurses.

It is estimated that between 1850 and 1950 as many as 1,500 British Doctors, and at least as many nurses left Britain to serve their Lord as missionaries. This is added to the many thousands from North America, Australia and New Zealand and Europe who took both the message of Salvation in Jesus Christ, and physical and mental healing to millions around the world. In many ways, the global health systems we have today, from the World Health Organisation to the international professional bodies all owe a debt to this heritage.

There is no way to do justice to such a huge heritage in such a brief space as this, so here are just a few examples of these heroes of healthcare.

### Dr. David Livingstone (1813-1873)

is well remembered as a missionary pioneer and explorer of Africa, but it is less well known that he was also the founder of some of the first missionary hospitals of the modern era across Southern and Eastern Africa. You can read more of David Livingstone's life and work at [www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biorplivingstone.html](http://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biorplivingstone.html)

### Ida Scudder

was another missionary doctor, from a long line of missionary doctors in India. She graduated from **Cornell Medical College** in New York City in 1899, as part of the first class at that school that accepted women as medical students. From the start she had a vision to train Indian women in medicine and the Christian faith. To that end, in July 1918 she opened a medical school for women, with seventeen students. In 1928 ground was broken for the "Hillsite" medical school campus a few miles west of the city of Vellore. Over the course of the next few years she worked tirelessly to raise the millions of pounds needed to complete the medical school, which finally opened in 1945.

Today, the **Vellore Christian Medical College** and hospital is the largest Christian hospital in the world, with 2,000 beds. Its medical school is one of the premier medical colleges in India, yet it retains its heart to train Christian health professionals to be witnesses to Christ in their clinical practice throughout the Indian sub-continent and beyond.

You can find out more about the work of CMC Vellore at <http://cmch-vellore.edu>

### Dr Kirin Martin

felt called by God to minister to the millions living in Delhi's slums. She started her practice to the poorest of Delhi's poor with a stethoscope and a desk under outside a shack by a pool of stagnant water in 1991. That anyone

was willing to go and provide basic health care for free in the middle of their community was a source of amazement to the slum dwellers who were more used to being ignored by wealthier Indians.

But she persisted, and ten years later this work came to be known as “**Asha**” (meaning “hope” in Hindi). Under Dr Martin's leadership and vision, Asha has grown to a team of 70 healthcare professionals and has helped transform the lives of 200,000 of Delhi's slum dwellers. Now, child mortality in the slums where Asha works has fallen 80% and there is 95% immunisation, almost full employment and minimal malnutrition or TB. Pregnant women receive antenatal care of almost UK standards (including ultrasound). Asha now works in 45 slum colonies around the city, engaging with approximately 10% of the city's 3 million slum dwellers.

So great an impact has Asha had in its relatively brief existence that Dr Martin is now consulted worldwide on how to develop primary health care in slum communities. But the principles she worked from are not just those of sound healthcare but also Biblical ones of building genuine and caring communities, seeking and practising justice and above all, living in God's love. For not only are the slum dwellers living in far better conditions, many have come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

You can find out more about Asha at [www.asha-india.org](http://www.asha-india.org)

### More information

All of these examples are only a tiny cross section of what has happened in the past and what is happening today. A lot more information on the quite and forgotten heroes of modern international healthcare can be found at [www.healthserve.org](http://www.healthserve.org)

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