

Celebrating the University of Melbourne's health partnerships in India

Faculty of
Medicine,
Dentistry and
Health Sciences



Foreword

Professor Mike McGuckin, Acting Dean of Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

For more than a century, the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences (MDHS) at the University of Melbourne has been privileged to work alongside colleagues and institutions across India in pursuit of a shared goal: improving health and wellbeing through education, research, innovation and service. This report celebrates those partnerships and their remarkable impact. Our engagement in India reflects the breadth and depth of our faculty. From public health and infectious disease research to disability rehabilitation, primary healthcare, clinical education, digital health and leadership development, there is a focus on working together to address the most pressing health challenges.

Most of the stories in this report demonstrate the power of partnership. Through long-standing collaborations with institutions such as the Christian Medical College Vellore, Public Health Foundation of India, the Catholic Health Association of India, the Gates Foundation, the Emmanuel Hospital Association, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, and many others, we have contributed to training future health leaders, strengthening health systems, advancing research, and supporting innovation in healthcare delivery. At the same time, our faculty, students and researchers have benefitted from the expertise, commitment and reach of our Indian partners.

The impact of these partnerships extends far beyond academia. Together, we have helped build evidence that informs public policy, contributed to advances in clinical care and public health, strengthened workforce capability, and expanded opportunities for research and innovation. Our joint work has improved access to healthcare for vulnerable communities, supported disability-inclusive development, advanced harm reduction and tobacco control initiatives, and explored new approaches to digital and virtual healthcare. These collaborations have generated knowledge that benefits both Australia and India whilst also contributing to global health outcomes.



As we celebrate 150 years of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, we also celebrate the many individuals and organisations whose vision, generosity, expertise and friendship have made this work possible. We are deeply grateful to our academic partners, healthcare institutions, government agencies, community organisations, philanthropists, alumni and students who have contributed to this shared journey. The achievements documented in this report belong to all of us.

India's growing leadership in health, medical research, digital innovation and healthcare delivery presents exciting opportunities for the future. We look forward to deepening these relationships in the years ahead, continuing to learn from one another, and working together to improve health outcomes, advance knowledge and create a healthier, more equitable future for communities across both our nations.

Professor Mike McGuckin

*Acting Dean
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
The University of Melbourne*

The Hon. Lisa Singh, CEO of Australia India Institute

Celebrating University of Melbourne's Health Partnerships in India showcases the depth of engagement between the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences (MDHS) and India, and highlights future opportunities in health technologies, digital health, workforce development and medical research. The Australia India Institute has been proud to support the faculty to advance Australia–India health collaboration. Our shared research efforts to improve public health have transcended borders, guided by shared values, mutual respect and a common commitment to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Through joint initiatives spanning health policy, healthcare delivery and inclusive health systems, our partnership has demonstrated the value of collaboration in strengthening systems and addressing contemporary health challenges. As we navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world, sustained Australia–India collaboration will be essential to addressing shared challenges and shaping the future of global health.

We have also been fortunate to benefit from the leadership of Professor Nathan Grills, an Academic Fellow at the Institute, whose contributions have been central to several of the Institute's key health initiatives and to strengthening Australia–India health engagement.



Alongside these partnerships, the Institute has explored health as a cross-cutting theme within its broader Australia–India education and research agenda, including work on sustaining healthy communities and inclusive digital healthcare.

I look forward to continuing our shared commitment of creating an impactful and equitable Australia–India health partnership.

The Hon. Lisa Singh

*Chief Executive Officer
Australia India Institute
The University of Melbourne*

The Context for Australia-India Cooperation in Health

The Australia–India health partnership has evolved from longstanding people-to-people connections into a strategically significant collaboration in health, medical research and healthcare innovation. Formal government frameworks, including the Health and Medicine Memorandum of Understanding (2017), the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020) and the Australia–India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (2022), have created favourable conditions for collaboration in public health, workforce development, medical research and innovation.

India is emerging as a leading centre of innovation and expertise in healthcare delivery, medical technologies and health workforce development. Through initiatives such as the Australia–India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF), both countries are advancing shared priorities in biotechnology, digital health and public health research. Further, shared experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic expanded cooperation in health security, vaccine research, public health preparedness, virtual healthcare and resilient medical supply chains. The University of Melbourne is well placed to both contribute to and learn from India's expanding capabilities.

Significant Historical Health Partnerships with India

The University of Melbourne's health partnerships with India have deep roots, shaped by generations of Melbourne Medical School graduates including **Dr Sister Mary Glowrey**, who travelled to Guntur in 1920 and cared for hundreds of thousands of patients. She went on to found the **Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI)** in 1943 and advocated for the establishment of **St John's Medical College** in Bengaluru. Today, the faculty's ongoing partnerships with CHAI and St John's continue a relationship spanning more than a century.



Dr Sister Mary Glowrey (1887 – 1957)

From the early 2000s, Melbourne's collaboration with India expanded through public health initiatives including **Project ORCHID** and the **North-East India Knowledge Project (2004-2016)**, in partnership with the **Emmanuel Hospital Association (EHA)** and supported by the **Gates Foundation**. These programs strengthened HIV prevention and harm-reduction services and laid the foundations for wider collaboration in public health and health systems strengthening. The **Overcoming Stigma and Discrimination (OSD) project (2008-2011)** in Manipur and Nagaland, further addressed HIV-related stigma through mass media, community communications and training.

Over the same period, the **Nossal Institute for Global Health** broadened the University of Melbourne's engagement through partnerships with organisations such as CHAI, the **Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)**, the **Community Health Global Network Uttarakhand Cluster** and the **Comprehensive Rural Health Project in Jamkhed**. These collaborations spanned across primary health care, disability inclusion, tobacco control and public health workforce development and mental health. Activities in mental health have included a **mental health literacy program in rural Maharashtra (2007-2008)**, various research activities with Project Burans in Uttarakhand and suicide prevention work across India.

Over the last 15 years, MDHS also strengthened its long-standing partnership with **Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore**, one of India's leading medical institutions. Building on early alumni connections, this partnership has grown to encompass education, clinical training, collaborative research and leadership development.



Project Orchid in India

Health Partnerships with India

– A Growing Network

Led by a new generation of programs, institutions, and people whilst also building on its historical links, the faculty today maintains a diverse and growing network of health partnerships across India.

Training Tomorrow's Health Leaders

The faculty has delivered leadership and capacity building programs in partnership with government and non-government institutions across India, including PHFI, CHAI, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), CMC Vellore and EHA. These programs have drawn on expertise from both Australia and India, and have been supported through Australian Government initiatives including Australian Leadership Awards, Endeavour Fellowships and the three DFAT-supported Public Sector Linkage Programs.

Leadership Scholarships with Charitable Health Institutions

The faculty runs two flagship scholarship programs and one leadership program in partnership with India's charitable health institutions including CHAI, CMC Vellore, Ormond College and St Vincent's Healthcare. The programs include:

The **Sister Mary Glowrey Scholars Program (2016)** trains healthcare leaders from CHAI-affiliated institutions across India and is delivered in partnership with Ormond College and St Vincent's Hospital. Since its establishment, 284 scholars have completed master's degrees, short courses and micro credentials across leadership, palliative care and disability streams and is hoping to support additional 300 leaders in the coming years. The program has produced distinguished alumni including CHAI Director General Fr Mathew Abraham and disability leader Jubin Varghese, contributing significantly to health and disability sectors across India.

The **John Moody Scholars Program (2025)** honours Dr John Moody, who established the Dental Department at CMC Vellore after graduating from the University

of Melbourne. The program builds the capacity of dentists, nurses and allied health professionals from India's charitable institutions through research fellowships, clinical fellowships and short courses, while strengthening education and research collaboration between CMC Vellore and the University of Melbourne.

The **CMC Vellore Health Leaders Program (2020)**, co-designed by CMC Vellore and the University of Melbourne, has delivered multiple cohorts through online webinars, clinician-scientist talks and small-group mentoring. The program prepares CMC Vellore's faculty for collaborative research and provides a structured pathway into the jointly supervised PhD program at the University of Melbourne.



John Moody Scholars Program Launch, named in honour of MDS alumnus Dr John Moody who was the founder of the Dental Department at CMC Vellore. The program aims to foster collaborative research, training, and leadership development between the two institutions.

Clinical Placements and Exchange

The faculty has developed a range of clinical placements and exchange programs that bring Melbourne students to India and Indian students to Melbourne, building professional networks, exposing students to diverse health systems and strengthening relationships with partner institutions.

Department of Optometry and Vision Sciences (DOVS)

A partnership with the Medical Research Foundation and Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai | MoU since 2015

The DOVS has built one of the faculty's longest-running

links with India through its partnership with the Medical Research Foundation, Sankara Nethralaya and the Elite School of Optometry. Formalised through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in 2015, the partnership supports staff and student exchanges and clinical placements. The department has also developed exchange programs with CMC Vellore, Manipal University and the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras).



MoU signing between the Department of Optometry and Vision Sciences and Medical Research Foundation.

Master of Speech Pathology Program Placements

Student placement partnership and research collaboration with Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) | Since 2022

MDHS and MAHE have a flourishing partnership with the Master of Speech Pathology program running interdisciplinary placements at MAHE Hospital, where students from speech pathology, audiology and physiotherapy gain experience across outpatient clinics, hospital wards and community health settings. Plans are underway to expand research and teaching collaborations.



Allison McKendrick, Anthea Cochrane and Bang Bui with staff and students from the Manipal Academy of Higher Education in India.

Primary Health Care in Jamkhed – Residential Subject

A partnership with the Comprehensive Rural Health Project (CRHP), Jamkhed | Since 2004

The faculty co-designed an immersive three-week residential subject with CRHP Jamkhed in Maharashtra, a globally recognised pioneer of community-based primary health care. Co-taught by CRHP staff, community members and Nossal Institute staff, the subject immerses students in village life and community health practice. Over more than two decades, more than 500 students across the Master of Public Health, Doctor of Medicine and other programs have completed the subject, making it one of Australia's longest-running internationally based graduate public health subjects.



Primary Health Care in Jamkhed workshop in India.

Clinical Research and Education

Across India, the faculty engages in a wide range of collaborative research and education partnerships, from jointly supervised PhD programs and clinical trials to curriculum development and workforce training. Partners include:

Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore

MoU with MDHS | Since 2012

The partnership with CMC Vellore includes student placements, visiting fellows and collaborative research spanning non-communicable disease, infectious disease and community rehabilitation. At the heart of MDHS's partnership with CMC Vellore is a jointly supervised PhD program which currently has 13 CMC's Vellore's faculty enrolled across nine departments and four schools.



Allied Health students undertaking a placement at the CMC Vellore Mary Varghese Institute of Rehabilitation.

Gates Foundation

Supporting EHA, CHAI and other partners | Since early 2000s

The Gates Foundation has supported a significant body of collaborative work between the University of Melbourne and its partners in India. This includes programs addressing HIV prevention and harm reduction, catastrophic health expenditure and improving access to maternal and child health services in impoverished states.

Emmanuel Hospital Association (EHA)

Multiple joint initiatives | Since 2004

EHA has been one of MDHS's most consistent and versatile Indian partners for over two decades. The partnership spans HIV prevention, disability and mental health research, primary health care and digital health inclusion through VirtuCare. Various EHA units have hosted MDHS students and collaborative research.

Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity – ASCOT Trial

Joint venture between the University of Melbourne and the Royal Melbourne Hospital | An India-wide trial with multiple sites | Since 2021

The Peter Doherty Institute led the India-based Australasian COVID-19 Trial (ASCOT), which contributed to the international evidence base on COVID-19 treatments. The Doherty Institute's collaboration with Indian research partners has since extended into NIH/NIAID-funded research on influenza and tuberculosis.

Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)

MoU with MDHS | Since 2015

One of the faculty's longest-running Indian partnerships is with PHFI, a premier public health research institute. Formalised through a 2015 MoU, the partnership includes joint appointments, a Master of Public Health (MPH) student exchange scheme, and joint learning initiatives such as the Excellence in Non-Communicable Disease Research (ENCORE) program, implemented with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). The partnership has supported major programs in HIV prevention, maternal and child health, public health workforce development and tobacco control.



Provost Professor Nicola Phillips and President of the Public Health Foundation of India, Professor Sanjay Zodpey renewed the University of Melbourne and PHFI MoU on 28 September 2023.

Asha

Multiple joint initiatives | Research published in 2016

The University of Melbourne has developed a long-standing relationship with Asha, a Delhi-based organisation working in urban slum communities on health, education and community development. This relationship includes scholarship pathways supporting Asha students into postgraduate study at the University of Melbourne and provides the faculty's technical advice and evaluation expertise for documenting Asha's long-term development model in the slums of Delhi.



Professor Mike McGuckin and Martyn Kreider of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, University of Melbourne, visited Asha centre in Delhi.

Australia-India Tobacco Control Taskforce – Plain Packaging Taskforce

A partnership between the Australia India Institute, Nossal Institute, PHFI and HRIDAY | Report launched in 2012

Building on the faculty's partnership with PHFI, the Australia-India Tobacco Control Taskforce was hosted and facilitated by the Australia-India Institute and coordinated by the Nossal Institute in partnership with PHFI and Health Related Information Dissemination Amongst Youth (HRIDAY). The taskforce, led by Professor K. Srinath Reddy, explored the feasibility of introducing plain packaging for tobacco products in India, drawing on Australia's experience. Bringing together researchers, public health advocates and policymakers from both countries, the taskforce produced a 2012 report and publications which contributed to public health policy discussions and progress in strengthening graphic health warnings in India.

Melbourne India Postgraduate Academy (MIPA)

Joint initiative with IIT Kanpur, IIT Madras, IIT Kharagpur, IISc Bangalore and IISER Tirupati | Established 2018 | MDHS joined in 2023

MIPA supports jointly supervised PhD candidates from the University of Melbourne and five of India's premier

research institutions, with candidates spending time at both universities and drawing on world-class facilities and expertise in both countries. It also hosts a biannual conference to share knowledge and build networks. MDHS currently allocates two joint PhDs annually, with candidates spending one year at IIT Kanpur as part of their doctoral training.

Disability and Health

MDHS has been a long-standing contributor to disability and health research in India, working across policy, education and practice. Through partnerships with Indian government bodies, non-government organisations and academic institutions, the faculty has helped build capacity, contribute to policy discussions and develop innovative models of inclusive care. Key partners include:

Australia-India Disability Partnership - Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)

MoU on disability cooperation implemented by MDHS, Melbourne Disability Institute, Nossal Institute and the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), with support from the Australia India Institute | Since 2018

Building on more than 15 years of Nossal Institute's disability research in India, a bilateral Australia-India MoU on disability was signed during the President of India's visit to Australia. Under the MoU, the partners have delivered five flagship projects with DEPwD and RCI, including the Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) course, now training more than 1,000 candidates annually across four institutions with Government of India funding and a body of research developing an economic case for disability investment in India.



A University of Melbourne delegation, joined by High Commissioner to Delhi His Excellency Mr Phillip Green, met with the Honourable Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Dr Virendra Kumar to discuss the CBID program.

In addition to these key partnership, key disability initiatives include:

VirtuCare – Inclusive Telehealth

**Supported by the Australia India Institute,
Australia-India Council (Australian Government)
| Multi-institutional | Since 2022**

VirtuCare brings together academic, government and industry partners to promote disability inclusive virtual health systems in India. In 2022, the faculty partnered with the Australia India Institute, with support from the Australian Department of Education, and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to convene a workshop on inclusive digital health. VirtuCare has since produced several research publications and recently presented the body of work at a Policy and Practice Forum at the Melbourne Global Centre in Delhi, attended by Indian and Australian government representatives, WHO and industry leaders.



Top: Dr Sanjay Sood, CDAC, key person in the development of eSanjeevani at Melbourne Global Centre Delhi.

Image below: University of Melbourne delegation at 'Virtual Healthcare: Towards an Inclusive Future Symposium' in Hyderabad.

Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) research

CBM India | PHFI | CHGN | Research launched in 2015

The Nossal Institute for Global Health, with the Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA), developed the Rapid Assessment of Disability (RAD) tool, an evidence-based framework for measuring disability prevalence and the impact of disability inclusive development programs. The RAD and other research tools were used in partnership

with PHFI and CBM India, to undertake extensive research on the effectiveness of DPOs including a world-first cluster randomised control trial.

Emerging Partnerships

In addition to its long-standing collaborations, the faculty is developing new partnerships in India, particularly in medical technology and interdisciplinary research.

Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT Kanpur) – MedTech and Structural Biology Research

SPARC grant and AISRF grant | 2023 - 2026 | MoU with MDHS | Since 2023

Through the Ministry of Education's **SPARC** scheme, the University of Melbourne and IIT Kanpur were awarded approximately \$600,000 for a project on point-of-care healthcare technologies. The project supports joint research, student and staff exchange, and an edited monograph, and has already enabled 11 University of Melbourne faculty to visit India and 30 Indian students to visit the University of Melbourne for collaborative projects.

A second grant, the \$1.3 million Australia-India Strategic Research Fund project "SARS-CoV-2 Entry: Imaging Structural Dynamics and the Therapeutic Landscape" (2023–2026), brings together researchers from the University of Melbourne and IIT Kanpur to investigate the structural dynamics of SARS-CoV-2 entry mechanisms and potential therapeutics. Further, MDHS is working with IIT Kanpur as it develops a new medical school, the Gangwal School of Medical Sciences and Technology by providing guidance on development of education curriculum and facilitating exchange of academic staff and academic materials.

Indian Institute of Science Bangalore (IISc) – InSPIRE Research Program

A partnership with IISc Bangalore and the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research (WEHI) | Since 2022

The faculty's relationship with IISc Bangalore is developing through the InSPIRE undergraduate research program, run by the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research (WEHI). Since commencement eleven IISc students have undertaken research placements at WEHI. The partnership continues to grow with two of these students progressing to PhD studies in 2025.

Impact – An overview



Harm reduction and HIV: Over 18,000 people who inject drugs, 12,000 sex workers and 2,000 men who have sex with men supported through community-based models that have shaped harm-reduction services across India.



Mental health: Contributed to mental health guidelines, training and state-level programs across Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Karnataka and the North-East, with work on suicide prevention contributing to policy and program development.



Disability inclusion and digital health: Over 1,000 candidates trained annually across four institutions through the CBID course. A world-first cluster randomised control trial demonstrated the effectiveness of DPOs. VirtuCare has contributed to changes to maximise disability inclusivity in India's digital health systems.



Clinical research: Various research including trialling Mass Drug Administration for Scabies Control and the India-based ASCOT Trial contributed to the global evidence base on COVID-19 treatment, extending into NIH/NIAID-funded research on influenza and tuberculosis.



Tobacco control: Contributed to public health policy discussions on tobacco control, with findings informing debates on graphic health warnings.



Education and capacity building: Leadership scholarships and training programs with PHFI, CHAI, DEPD, CMC Vellore and EHA have helped build next generation of health leaders across charitable and public health sectors in India.



CMC Vellore Principal Professor Solomon Sathishkumar with MDHS Leadership and Friends of Vellore leaders during his October 2024 visit.



Fr Dr Mathew, Director-General of the Catholic Health Association of India presented with a gift from Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at the launch of the Sr Dr Mary Glowrey Scholars Program in 2016.

Looking ahead – the future

Building on over a century of collaboration, MDHS's partnerships in India are expected to expand. Plans are underway to scale the Tele-Rehabilitation Services, to strengthen oncology collaboration between CMC Vellore and the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, and to grow postgraduate exchange programs with partners in India.

The faculty will continue to facilitate leadership and scholarship pathways such as the Sister Mary Glowrey Scholars Program, John Moody Scholars Programs

and CMC Vellore Health Leaders program, while deepening research partnerships to address pressing and evolving health problems.

As India continues to grow as a global leader in health, medicine and medical technology, MDHS looks forward to the next chapter of this partnership, drawing on India's depth of clinical experience, research capability and innovation across health education, research, digital health and leadership.

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- Asha
- Australian High Commission and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
- Gates Foundation
- Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI)
- CBM India Trust
- Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Mohali
- CHGN Uttarakhand Cluster
- Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore
- Comprehensive Rural Health Project (CRHP), Jamkhed
- Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE)
- Emmanuel Hospital Association (EHA)
- Friends of Vellore Victoria
- Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore
- Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur
- Indian Institute of Technology Madras
- Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE)
- Medical Research Foundation, Chennai
- Melbourne India Postgraduate Academy (MIPA)
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) / National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- Ormond College
- Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity
- Pragyaan Sustainable Health Outcomes Foundation (PRASHO)
- Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) and associated Indian Institutes of Public Health (IIPH)
- Rajagiri College of Social Sciences
- Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)
- Sankara Nethralaya and Elite School of Optometry, Chennai
- St John's Medical College, Bengaluru
- St Vincent's Hospital and St Vincent's Healthcare
- Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology
- VirtuCare Network partners, including The George Institute for Global Health and HRIDAY

About the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences (MDHS) at the University of Melbourne was established in 1876. Today it stands as Australia's largest educator of health professionals and is the nation's leading centre for health and biomedical education.

MDHS educates more than 22,000 students across 12 health disciplines and employs over 3,000 staff. The faculty ranks among the world's leading institutions for medicine and health sciences.

For 150 years, the University of Melbourne has advanced research, education and clinical innovation through several meaningful and strategic partnerships, including multiple impactful partnerships with both government and non-government Indian institutions.

This report was prepared by the Australia India Institute in collaboration with the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, the University of Melbourne



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