

# The Hope Mobile

## INDIAN CANCER SOCIETY MOBILE CANCER DETECTION CENTRES

Founded in 1951 by Dr. D.J. Jussawalla and Mr. Naval Tata, the Indian Cancer Society is India's first anti-cancer NGO committed to the welfare and rehabilitation of underprivileged cancer patients and the awareness and early detection of cancer.

In India, it is estimated that at any given time there are 21 lakh people suffering from cancer, out of which 6.4 lakh succumb to this disease every year. The incidence of cancer is also going up alarmingly as more than 10 lakh cases are discovered every year, often too late to cure. In addition to the suffering involved, the cost of treatment is also astronomical and beyond the reach of the poor.

The Indian Cancer Society felt strongly that '**Cancer when detected early is curable**'. The Society realised there was an urgent need to establish a service whereby people who otherwise would not opt for regular check-ups could be screened for the various commonly occurring cancers. Keeping this view in mind, the Indian Cancer Society started cancer check-ups for the public at various detection centres in Mumbai. However, there was a need to reach out to those living in the villages and cities where there was no access to such centres.

In order to provide this much needed service, the Indian Cancer Society launched India's first Mobile Cancer Detection Centre (MCDC) on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1982, in Mumbai. It commenced its screening operations on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1982 at Mantralaya, Mumbai from where, over the years, it gradually moved outside of Mumbai, reaching villages and cities in many far flung areas of Maharashtra.

The ICS MCDC undertakes cancer screening check ups at the work sites of industries, factories, workshops and offices and at the doorsteps of the public in communities, schools and colleges. This facility saves thousands of people from taking time off to visit fixed centres. Ignorance, lack of awareness and poverty usually prevent the underprivileged from going for regular screening. The community spirit involved in holding these camps encourages those who would otherwise hesitate to opt for such check-ups. ICS charges only a nominal sum of Rs. 250/- per person for its cancer detection screening which otherwise would cost 8-10 times more in any other healthcare centre so that poor and middleclass people, both men and women, are encouraged to opt for the check up.

Today, the ICS Mobile Cancer Detection Centre goes all over Maharashtra and to Goa, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. The Mobile Unit consists of a fully equipped van, which carries doctors and other supporting staff and a variety of equipment including an x-ray machine. The most commonly occurring cancers are screened for ie. oral cancers, blood cancers, lung cancers along with breast and cervix cancers in women and prostate cancer in

men. Suspicious or positive cases are referred to the Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai or to a local cancer hospital if the patient is reluctant to travel to Mumbai. The staff also provides guidance and counselling to the patient. This service screens those attending the camps not only for cancer but frequently detects ailments other than cancer.

From its launch in 1982, nearly 2 lakh people have been screened for cancer through 2000 camps with detection of over 3300 suspected cases referred for further evaluation. Every year, the Indian Cancer Society organises over 60 camps where over 5000 men and women are screened for cancer. Out of these, more than 100 suspected cases are usually detected which are then referred to Tata Memorial Hospital for further investigation and management.

In April 2010, the Indian Cancer Society through the single minded efforts of Mr. Alan Rosling, ex- Director, Tata Sons and the generous contributions of more than Rs. 1 crore from well wishers, will launch the country's first State of the Art Digital Mammography mobile van. For thousands of women, who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to be screened for breast and cervical cancer, this van will become their "Hope Express".

There was a time when cancer was believed to be a malevolent, inexplicable force which took control of the body and medical science was unable to stop its relentless fatal march.

Today, there is **HOPE**.

Breakthroughs in medical science and technology, awareness of the contributing factors to the disease and a healthy diet and lifestyle have all helped in controlling cancer. **But the key is regular screening and early detection.** Many lives have been saved by the timely intervention and service offered by the ICS Mobile Cancer Detection vans. They are truly the "Hope Express" for the country.