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## Patna: A Medical Mission

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The Patna Holy Family Hospital Jubilee began Christmas 1964 with the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the hospital and ends this October as its school of nursing marks its own silver jubilee. In an article in the *Patna Jesuit* summing up this year, Father Kevin Cleary, S.J. wrote: "The School of Nursing . . . is a center radiating a most special influence; the best of nursing traditions are passed on and spread to Catholic hospitals and Government hospitals all over India. These are the facts of 25 years of history."

From its very inception, Patna Holy Family Hospital, like its counterparts in 22 towns and cities in southeast Asia, Africa and South America, is geared to both patient care and teaching programs.

During these 25 years, Patna H.F.H. has recorded 1 million patients treated, 32,000 operations, 18,000 deliveries on the care side. On the teaching side of the balance are 246 graduates from its School of Nursing, 257 from the School of Midwifery, 21 compounders (junior pharmacists) and 20 doctors who have spent 1 to 3 years in a preceptorship type of residency program.

The old hospital began in the heart of the bazaar with only 12 beds. Within 10 years it had in-

creased to 120, and now has a present 200 bed capacity. The Kurji Holy Family Hospital on the Ganges at the opposite end of town. Kurji, at the west end, is one of four hospitals, the others being under government auspices, serving a town population of almost half a million people plus those from the outlying villages within a forty mile radius.

The object of the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries\* which owns and operates the hospital has always been to provide professional medical care in mission lands, for the love of our Lord. The Society itself is only 15 years older than its Patna Hospital, and has 45 sister-doctors of its own, some with specialty qualifications. Patna is its first hospital in India and its second in Southeast Asia.

In India, most of the lay doctors associated with our hospitals are Indian. However, Dr. H. Purcell of St. Louis has just finished a four-year tour as chief of surgery at our Delhi Holy Family Hospital, and Dr. J. Reuss is presently on a 2 year tour as radiologist at Kurji. Dr. William Caccamise, an ophthalmologist has already held four winter "eye camps" at Kurji and is planning a fifth for 1966. Judging by the past, next time he will see at least 5000

out patients in the clinic, about 500 of whom will come to cataract surgery.

The medical problems of Patna are similar to those in the United States, with a slightly different emphasis, and with added tropical diseases. A very important part of the hospital service is the immunization and health teaching program of its small public health division. Typhoid and amebiasis are like the common cold in frequency. TB, tetanus, cholera and small pox are almost daily problems most of the year. Cirrhosis, peptic ulcer, hypertension and diabetes remind one of any city hospital here.

Most of the deliveries are done by nurse-midwives after prior screening by a woman doctor. Abdominal operations make up most of the general major surgery, gastro-duodenal, biliary and bowel problems

being common. Vaginal hysterectomies are about as frequent as abdominal because of the many cases of massive prolapse. Cancer surgery is less common because so many of the patients still come in the terminal or pre-terminal stages.

The work presents many challenges and is probably not too dissimilar to that written of by Dr. Bain and his colleagues, even down to the joys and problems.

\*The Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries is a religious congregation of women founded by Mother Anna Dengel, M.D. in 1925. Its American headquarters is located at 8400 Pine Road, Philadelphia, Pa. #19111. The general headquarters is located at Piazza Cimone 3, Rome, Italy.

Sister M. Frederic, author of the above, is a former Medical Director of the Patna Mission.

