



A TRUST-BASED PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION: NEW BURN CARE CENTER IN INDIA

IN INDIA, OVER 1 MILLION PEOPLE A YEAR SUSTAIN MODERATE OR SEVERE BURNS. MANY LOSE THEIR LIVES, AND THOSE WHO SURVIVE OFTEN ENDURE SEVERE DEFORMITIES. THIS LEAVES FEW ABLE TO WORK, AND MANY FACE SOCIAL ISOLATION. WHILE PLASTIC SURGERY CAN REPAIR BURN INJURIES, IT IS OFTEN TOO EXPENSIVE OR INACCESSIBLE FOR MANY. DETERMINED TO CHANGE THIS, RENOWNED PLASTIC SURGEON DR. SUBODH SINGH IS ON A MISSION TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE IN NEED RECEIVES THE NECESSARY TREATMENT. AND NOW, WITH A SIGNIFICANT GIFT FROM THE THOMPSON FOUNDATION, HE IS LEADING THE CREATION OF A STATE-OF-THE-ART BURN CARE CENTER IN VARANASI.

Since the 1990s, Dr. Subodh has provided thousands of free reconstructive surgeries to underserved populations with cleft lips, palates, and burn injuries. He founded G.S. Memorial Trust in memory of his father to ensure that cost is never a barrier to life-changing care. While cleft care in India

has made significant progress, burn care remains critically underdeveloped. Many hospitals lack the equipment, training, and infrastructure to manage complex cases. "Doctors don't understand that most morbidities and deformities can be prevented and corrected," Dr Subodh says.



With start-up funding from the US-based Thompson Family Foundation, a new state-of-the-art burn care center in Varanasi, currently under construction, will more than triple the number of surgeries performed by G.S. Memorial—from about 4,000 a year to more than 15,000. And as important, argues Dr. Subodh, is the fact that the center will also train other doctors in treating burn injuries, expanding access to these life-changing surgeries. “When someone does good work, others learn from it and standards improve,” he says.

CHALLENGES IN BURN CARE

India has a high incidence of burn injuries and deaths, with over 1 million people suffering moderate to severe burns every year. The impact is

particularly severe among women and children, who are more at risk to such injuries. Many survivors are left with disfigurements that severely limit quality of life and opportunities for success.

Yet despite these devastating effects, very few facilities treat burn patients, and those that do either lack modern equipment and high-quality care services or are geographically or financially out of reach for much of the population. Equally problematic is that doctors are not given adequate training in treating burn patients. Most treatments, Dr. Subodh explains, consist of the application of ointments, and because of pressure to free up hospital beds, burn patients are often discharged prematurely.

A PROVEN MODEL FOR SCALING ACCESS

Dr. Subodh has already shown what is possible. In the early 2000s, he helped catalyze a nationwide expansion of cleft surgeries in partnership with Smile Train. His methods for patient outreach and treatment planning were adopted by hospitals across the country, increasing annual cleft surgeries in India tenfold in just over a few years. Now, he believes the same thing can happen in burn care through the training programs at the new Varanasi center. "I can't treat all the patients of India, but I can help train a generation of doctors who can," says Dr. Subodh.

"I WANT TO SEE NO BURN PATIENT DYING OR DEVELOPING DEFORMITIES BECAUSE OF POOR BURN TREATMENT. THAT'S MY HOPE."

**DR. SUBODH KUMAR SINGH,
FOUNDER, G.S. MEMORIAL TRUST**

A MISSION-ALIGNED PARTNERSHIP

This vision resonated deeply with Bill and Nancy Thompson, founders of the Thompson Family Foundation, when they met on a visit to India. Moved by Dr Subodh's dedication, they committed to supporting his long-term vision for equitable burn care access. Inspired by Dr. Subodh's work, the Thompsons wanted to make a significant donation to help him bring his vision to life. However, they

needed to find a way to support his efforts from the United States. To facilitate this, G.S. Memorial Trust set up a Friends Fund at Myriad USA, allowing them to receive tax-deductible donations from U.S. supporters without the hassle of creating their own U.S. charity.

In addition, the Thompsons connected with ISOS, a Bangalore-based consultancy that provides project management and engineering services to healthcare projects across India. "We are a very small staff here in the U.S., so we were looking for a partner with expertise in Asia," explains Katie Ulvestad, co-director of the Thompson Family Foundation. "We needed local partners with deep expertise, and Myriad USA helped make that happen."



“DR. SUBODH HAS A BIG JOB AHEAD, BUT FOR THE FOUNDATION, IT ALL COMES DOWN TO IDENTIFYING TOP-NOTCH LEADERS—BECAUSE GREAT LEADERS DO GREAT THINGS.”

**DON THOMPSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
THOMPSON FAMILY FOUNDATION**

A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

While supporting the Varanasi burn center project meant that the foundation needed a due diligence partner in India, the Thompsons needed no due diligence to recognize that Dr. Subodh had the leadership qualities they often seek when making any philanthropic gift. His charisma, passion, and compassion during their first meeting convinced them to make one of the foundation’s largest ever gifts. “Dr. Subodh has a big job ahead, but for the foundation, it all comes down to identifying top-notch leaders—because great leaders do great things,” says Don Thompson, executive director of the Thompson Family Foundation. “He has this very special skill. He’s a force to be reckoned with, and we look forward to a longstanding partnership to bring meaningful change to these communities.”

<https://gsmemorialtrust.org/index.html>

<https://www.every.org/gs-memorial-trust>

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