



humanity in motion

[www.rotarycanterbury.org.uk](http://www.rotarycanterbury.org.uk)

## rotary club of canterbury press release

10 March 2012: Immediate

### **Canterbury Rotarians link-up to help wipe out Polio!**

Rotary members from two Canterbury clubs have been playing a part in India's dynamic campaign to wipe out polio. They joined a team of volunteers to vaccinate children against the paralysing disease in the shanty towns and slums of New Delhi and Karnal, after Indian Rotarians invited them to publicise February's National Immunisation Day.

Two past presidents; Richard Kemball-Cook from the Canterbury Club, with his daughter Amy and Richard Wickham from the Forest of Blean Club, with his wife Anne, joined Rotarians from across the UK, Belgium, Hong Kong, USA and Canada.

Former St Edmund's School student, Amy Kemball-Cook, said: "We sat with our box of supercooled vaccine in a temple in a rundown area, and an hour later we had given the drops to over 100 children under five." Describing the inoculation process, Amy said: "Organisers sought out children under five and each child who received the two drops was rewarded with a small gift as an encouragement. It got a little frantic when the local kids realised that the toys we had bought were really cool and they brought the same kids round again. Luckily we had marked the little finger of the left hand with a purple pen, so we could tell!"

Widespread vaccination that started in the West in the 1950s which means there have been no new cases of polio here for many years. In India, however, 99% of children must be vaccinated every month because the water is so polluted or they are sick and don't retain the vaccine.

This year in January India announced a milestone: one whole year with no new cases of polio. The World Health Organization has now declared that polio is no longer endemic in India. "What an achievement!" said Richard Kemball-Cook: "I came here five years ago where there had been over 2000 cases across India in the previous twelve months; now there have been no new cases for a year." But he warned against complacency: "The vaccination campaign has to continue because the virus is still present and there are an increasing number of cases in Pakistan and Afghanistan." Although India has been taken off the endemic list, it has not yet been declared polio-free: this will happen in January 2014 if no cases of polio have appeared by then. But Richard is optimistic: "The eradication of Polio became the biggest partnership of governments, private organisations that has been seen in peacetime. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have given \$555 million and challenged the Rotary clubs around the work to come up with \$400 million: and they did!"

**Further Information:** Richard Kemball-Cook – (h) 01227 780488, (mob) 07860346776

### **Accompanying photographs (no restrictions):**

Rotary\_Polio\_Richard\_20120310.jpg - Richard Kemball-Cook outside a New Delhi vaccination station

Rotary\_Polio\_Amy\_20120310.jpg - Amy Kemball-Cook dispenses the polio vaccine drops to child in New Delhi

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Richard Kemball-Cook outside vaccination station



Amy Kemball-Cook dispensing polio vaccine

**Ends**

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