

# They keep heart beating, with love

## Two Cardiac Surgeons Treat Poor Patients At Hi-Tech Hospitals For Free

T A Ameerudheen | TNN

At a time when skyrocketing medical expenses deny a sizeable chunk of our population the opportunity for decent, let alone advanced, medical attention, Dr N S Devananda and



Dr Joseph Xavier are on a noble mission. The two cardiac surgeons in the city provide some sol-

ace to poor patients, who have to undergo emergency and expensive heart surgeries.

The two had set up Needy Heart Foundation (NHF) in 2001, and have operated upon 1,100 poor patients without taking a single penny as remuneration.

The foundation accepts donations from philanthropists. The surgeries are done either in Wockhardt Hospital or Manipal Heart Foundation. "We use high-tech facilities at these two hospitals and perform the surgeries at cost price. Our service is free. Contributions from donors help us pay hospital charges, medicine cost and other expense," Dr Devananda revealed.

He operates on patients at



Needy Heart Foundation trustees (from left) Dr N S Devananda, Dr Joseph Xavier and O P Khanna with some of the beneficiaries

Wockhardt while Dr Xavier performs surgeries at Manipal Hospital.

"We would travel through the length and breadth of rural Karnataka and different parts of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. This was in early 2000. We held heart check-up camps. In fact, the camps gave us the motivation to set up NHF," Dr Devananda said.

They realized that expensive heart surgeries were beyond the reach of the rural poor, although many of them suffered from complicated heart diseases. "We decided to bring them back to life. So we floated the foundation in 2001 with our meagre contribution

of Rs 25,000," Dr Xavier said.

**NEEDY HEART FOUNDATION**  
C/o Manipal Hospital  
No. 98, Rustum Bagh,  
Airport Road, Bangalore - 17  
[needyheartfoundation.org](http://needyheartfoundation.org)

The foundation picked up momentum when O P Khanna, who worked with corporate giants and the United Nations, joined them as a trustee in 2003 voluntarily. Dr RC Srivyas, a cardiac surgeon who works in the US, and industrialist Rajendra Kotaria, are other trustees.

The trustees were clear

about their objectives — all patients will be attended to irrespective of their health condition, and priority will be given to women and children. The foundation's activities spread through word of mouth and more patients started coming in. The trustees, however, found that patients didn't value free treatment. "Most were reluctant to follow doctors' advice once the surgeries got over. Their callous attitude forced us to re-think our strategy. Now, we ask prospective patients and their relatives to raise as much money as they can and the rest would be taken care of by NHF," Dr Xavier pointed out.

"The trick worked! We have seen tremendous change in the attitude of the patients as they value their contribution," Dr Xavier added.

Even after saving 1,100 poor persons from the jaws of death, Dr Devananda and Dr Xavier say they can do more if they get enough contributions from philanthropists. Donations for the trust are tax exempted under the IT Act, 80G.

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