



The Matilda International Hospital on The Peak has been a much-loved Hong Kong institution since it opened its doors back in 1907. We meet **MARY RAFFERTY**, the hospital's CEO, to find out what inspires her and how she has helped turn the Matilda into one of the most respected private hospitals in the world.



### Who was Matilda?

On Christmas Day of 1858, Granville Sharpe and Matilda Lincoln arrived in Hong Kong as newlyweds. Over the next 30 years, the young couple made Hong Kong their home, Granville making his fortune investing in banking, commerce and real estate while Matilda dedicated herself to helping the community – especially widows and orphans. Matilda died of pneumonia at the age of 64 and a heartbroken Granville decided to put the remains of his estate in trust for the construction of a hospital to be built “to the glory of God and the good of man, in loving memory of my sainted wife.” Her grave in Hong Kong Cemetery bears the inscription “Matilda Lincolne Sharpe, who died full of love for everybody”.

**Mary, what first brought you to Hong Kong?**

I arrived in January 1993, after experiencing the first Gulf War while working in Saudi Arabia and having recently got married. Since childhood, it had been my dream to visit Hong Kong as it seemed so exotic and exciting.

**First impressions?**

Hong Kong immediately felt vibrant and full of energy, which totally suited my personality. Coming in to Kai Tak with the famous right turn immediately before landing is a fond memory. The contrasts of the old and new were so striking – the unique old trams, the Chinese medicine shops, the wet markets – all existing in the middle of a modern sophisticated city of skyscrapers. The cultural diversity was striking and I found that fascinating.

**What did you do before joining the Matilda?**

I'm a nurse, midwife and MBA graduate majoring in health services management. Having had clinical experience of managing a very busy maternity department helps me to this day in understanding and managing the needs of a modern hospital. Prior to that, I worked as a cardiac nurse, which gave me experience in the general side of the hospital. Immediately prior to joining the Matilda, I was first a consultant

and then a director at another private hospital in Hong Kong.

**What were your aims at the Matilda when you took up the CEO role?**

I was aware of the hospital's unique characteristics while also realising the need for building upgrades and renovations, new services and equipment, and improved financial planning. I worked with the board and the staff to continue what Matilda does best – provide high-quality healthcare for the local and international communities in Hong Kong – while improving the rest by investing in people development and in the latest medical technologies and systems. During the process, I initiated quality accreditation programmes overseen by outside independent bodies, the first hospital in Hong Kong to do so. Matilda was the first hospital in Hong Kong to obtain ISO accreditation.

**What would you consider your greatest achievements at the Matilda?**

I had a vision to turn the hospital around and make it a financial success while maintaining its reputation for compassionate care; this always comes top of the list of our priorities. The hospital is now one of the most respected private hospitals in the world. Secondly, to have put in quality accreditation and management systems which are recognised and audited by independent external standards organisations. Also: announcing to the staff and board that the hospital had broken even for the first time in history in 2004.

**And your fondest Matilda memories?**

Starting the Matilda Children's Foundation (MCF). The foundation offers children corrective surgery to improve the quality of their lives and offer them hope for the future. "Little Wu", our first patient, underwent extensive life-changing surgery in 2003 and the event will forever bring joy to my heart. A team of doctors, nurses and staff continues to offer their services and time for free and up to now, MCF has provided life-changing surgeries, free-of-charge, to over 40 children with ailments such as cleft lip, spina bifida, congenital knee deformities, hip dislocation and urological conditions, among others. These children from the region live in very disadvantaged circumstances, and would otherwise not have access to treatments.

**Outside the office, what do you like to do with your spare time?**

Travel! I recently visited South America for the first time which was a delight. I have travelled extensively in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa, North America, Australia and New Zealand. I enjoy yoga, meditation, Zumba and skiing, and I'm currently learning to play golf. At busy times I enjoy relaxing with a good book.

**Where do you live?**

I live on-site at the Matilda so that I am available should an emergency arise which needs my attention. I'm easily accessible 24 hours, and can be in my office in minutes. Living on the Peak beside a country park with wonderful views of the South China Sea is so relaxing.



# MATILDA INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL

Outpatient Department

## The Sedan Chair Race

In 1907, when the Matilda opened its doors on Mount Kellett, the only means of transport there for patients, doctors and visitors was by sedan chair. Seven decades later, in 1975, staff member Nurse Joyce Smith came up with the idea of a race carrying sedan chairs around a 2.1km route on the Peak to raise awareness of the location and facilities of the hospital. The first race attracted just four teams; 37 years on, it's a much-loved event in Hong Kong's sporting calendar, attracting over 45 running teams and 2,000 visitors, and raising much-needed funds for over 40 local charities. To date, the Sedan Chair Race has raised over \$61 million. The Sedan Chair Race 2012 takes place from 10am to 3.30pm on 28 October at Matilda International Hospital. <sup>21</sup>

