



## **December at LVPEI**

LVPEI started in 1987 with a clear focus on developing a Centre of Excellence in eye care encompassing clinical care, education and research akin to US academic centres. The only deviation from the traditional path of academic centres happened when we initiated a “Centre for Vision Rehabilitation” for people with irreversible forms of low vision and blindness. This dream was soon realised fairly easily when my brother-in-law offered to provide the funding and thus emerged the “Dr. P.R.K. Prasad Centre for Rehabilitation of Blind and Visually Impaired”. Over the more than two decades, this centre has grown multifold in size, capacity, volume, quality and reach. Very soon after its inception, the family of one of our patients, Mr. Deshpande, decided to fund the low vision component to the centre. During December, a major milestone was achieved when we crossed the 100,000 client mark, a lot of who have carved very successful lives for themselves professionally, socially and personally. Being the first eye institute in the world to have ventured along this path of integrating vision rehabilitation as an important component, the experience has been one of the most gratifying. It is also a matter of great satisfaction to see other institutions including the world’s oldest, Moorfields Eye Hospital of London following this trend in the recent past. Without doubt, the need is immense and hopefully more will follow.

On the clinical services front, our newest tertiary centre at the Kode Venkatadri Chowdary campus in Vijayawada has crossed the 25,000 mark at the end of nine months, with the Children’s Eye Care Centre there covering more than 2000 children. The review of annual statistics of 2011 showed a healthy increase in volumes across the entire network at all levels – primary, secondary and tertiary. Equally impressive was the growth in the coverage through our door-to-door screening programmes.

Several graduation programmes of diverse cadres starting from the third batch of Master’s in Community Eye Health to long term ophthalmology fellowship programme were the highlights from the education centre.

Our community eye health group convened its partners and our rural programme staff for a one day meeting to take a universal pledge to make all villages free of avoidable blindness in their areas of coverage by 2020. Discussions were revelatory with so many solutions available to what appeared like recalcitrant problems from our own network. The group returned to their bases fully recharged.

Our Institute hosted the Asia-Pacific Vitreo-Retina Society meeting from December 1 – 3, and it attracted 800 delegates from 35 countries. The content was excellent and the discussions were exhilarating, presenting a panoramic view of what is “current” in the understanding and management of vitreoretinal pathologies. As the burden of problems like diabetic retinopathy and age related macular degeneration (PDT) increases, these interactions and exposure to ophthalmologists in this region of the world become critical.



To the list of our Silver Jubilee lectures, we have added a sporting legend this month, Kris Srikanth, former captain and present Chairman of Selection Committee of Indian cricket team. Kris spoke of leadership and team work, passion, hard work and innovation as constituents of his recipe for success.

Finally, we had the most pleasant event of the month with Vanita Ganesh completing her twenty five years with us. Here is her journey in her own words. “25 years of struggle, happiness, commitment and enjoyment! When I joined this organization in September 1987 as a nursing assistant, my daughters were 5 and 2. I had never seen such a hospital in Hyderabad with a modern and clean building. I live in Malkajgiri, 14 km away. I had to change 2 buses and then take the institute vehicle. For 7 'o' clock shifts, I had to catch a train at 5 am, wait at Secunderabad from 5.15 am to 6 am to catch a bus to Punjagutta and then catch the institute vehicle at 6.40 am.

Managing both home and work was challenging. My late father-in-law was very strict — I had to be home by 6.15 pm. Even if I was 5-10 minutes late, he would ask, “Are you doing a PM's job?” In the morning, Dr Rao would set my time and in the evening my father-in-law! For 22 years, I never reached the institute late. Only in the past 2-3 years, I have been late twice or thrice a year.

When I joined LVPEI, I did not know anything. My aim was to work hard and be truthful. I respect and admire the rules of the organization. Not to call anybody Sir/Madam, except patients. Non-paying patients were to be treated equally with respect. If Dr Rao/Mrs Ramam came by, I knew I should not stop working and get up; I was expected to continue my work. LVPEI encourages the staff and recognizes them by giving monthly and yearly awards; I am proud to say that I was the 2<sup>nd</sup> employee to receive the award. Outside the Institute too, if we tell anyone that we work at LVPEI, we receive a lot of respect.

I have worked in most departments. Mrs Vijaya L Ramam, Administrator, was very supportive and encouraging. Dr Das was my guru. It was a turning point for me and the work was challenging. Working with him, I rose to the position of Supervisor, Junior Administrator and now Associate Administrator. I learnt a lot from him and he supported me in many ways.

I believe in and practice being truthful to one's work and home — that will give you the best returns. Do good and it will come back to you. From a nursing assistant, I became an Associate Administrator and from a mother, a grandmother! Today, my daughters have grown up and are married. I have a 4-year-old granddaughter, Kartavya. I thank the organization for giving me an opportunity to serve the people and grow personally and professionally.”

Gullapalli N Rao