



February at LVPEI

I am happy to share that the expansion of our network along all levels of the LVPEI pyramid – primary, secondary and tertiary was the hallmark of February. This has extended our footprint to two new districts of Andhra Pradesh – Krishna and Khammam, both very diverse in their profiles. Krishna district is at the heart of the Krishna delta, very fertile, one of the more literate, affluent and entrepreneurial districts, while Khammam is less developed, with a vast tribal belt bordering the state of Chhattisgarh, but with substantial activity in coal mining, power generation, ferro alloys and paper manufacturing.

The common thread that binds these programmes is that of exemplary local community participation – the tertiary centre outside Vijayawada city (Krishna district), and the spectacular, verdant secondary centre in Paloncha (Khammam district) are fine examples of local philanthropy funding health care. Also a first was the inauguration of a cluster of 5 Vision Centres linked to the secondary centre within two weeks of its respective inauguration, funded by LDS Charities of Salt Lake City of US. I place on record our indebtedness to the Kode family, the Navabharat family and LDS Charities for their munificence in making these possible. Together, these centres will cover a population of 15 million with high quality comprehensive eye care. Another signature feature of ours in these is that 70-80% of all employees are recruited from the local population, contributing to the career development and employment to local youth.

One of the biggest eye banking organisations in the world is SightLife of Seattle in the U.S. It has embarked on an ambitious programme of creating eye banking systems in the developing countries of international standards. Our Ramayamma International Eye Bank has been designated as a “Centre of Excellence” by SightLife and functions as a major resource and training centre for India and other developing countries. There were a series of meetings and workshops held at the beginning of February with SightLife’s India network where our team played an active role. Our performance was reviewed and a strategy was developed for the progress of our eye bank over the next 5 years. This calls for a doubling in the volumes of both cornea harvesting as well as corneal transplantation. (In this year of April 1 to March 31, we would have done close to 1800 transplants in our network).

One programme that we are proud of is the career advancement of our staff. We are delighted that one of our public health colleagues, Vilas, received his Ph.D. from Australia’s University of New South Wales on his work related to Vision Centres. Our congratulations to Vilas! This is part of our internal capacity building and this would help our public health effort significantly.

Honours are also due to: Santosh Honavar, who has been invited to serve as Committee Chair to update the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) Residency Curriculum for the Oculoplastic Surgery and Orbit section; Ajit Babu Majji who was unanimously

declared Chairman, Academic & Research Committee of the All India Ophthalmic Society; and Naga Chandrika, optometrist at LVPEI who received the Best Poster Award at the 35th All India Optometry Conference.

Among our visitors was a delegation from several hospitals in China, who had a tour of our facilities and interaction with our colleagues. This was part of a tour arranged for this group to study the Indian system of eye care.

We are thankful to our friend, Juan Carlos Aragon and Coopervision for awarding a grant to have first Visiting Professor to our School of Optometry, Dr. Des Fonn of University of Waterloo, Canada and a world renowned authority on contact lenses. Des will be with us later this year. We are hopeful that this will be the beginning of a “Visiting Professor Programme for the School”.

As I close this communication, I had the exciting news of the record performance of the new centres inaugurated this month, which rounds off yet another month of achievements for LVPEI.

Gullapalli N. Rao