



April at LVPEI

The launch of “LVPEI-Next 25” by the Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Mr. Pallam Raju was the highlight this month. A cluster of six initiatives to create centres of excellence mark the beginning of the second 25 years for LVPEI. The idea is to elevate our current activities to higher levels in these areas of focus that encompass service delivery, education and research. Academy for Eye Care Education, Child Sight Institute, Institute for Eye Care for the Elderly, Institute for Ocular Regeneration, Institute for Eye Cancer and Centre of Excellence in Eye Banking constitute this group. While we are already engaged in all the activities, these new centres act as an umbrella, while significantly enhancing the capacity both quantitatively and qualitatively in each of these areas incorporating the best practices around the world. This process of increasing our capacity should prepare us well for the demands we have in service delivery, education, research, advocacy and capacity building.

One of the major eye problems that are seen in India that lead to corneal blindness is ocular surface disease recalcitrant to traditional forms of treatment. Our stem cell team, in collaboration with the University of Sheffield in United Kingdom, developed a simple technique to promote corneal surface regeneration using a biodegradable synthetic membrane. This approach will make the procedure less expensive, easier to perform and can be practiced by most ophthalmologists that will significantly enhance the access to such services. The research was funded by the Wellcome Trust of the United Kingdom. A detailed publication on this subject by the two groups has appeared in the journal “Biomaterials” this month. This was indeed a great breakthrough that will help hundreds of thousands of people ravaged by such conditions as chemical burns. Our compliments to the entire team that made this possible.

Our Uveitis specialist Soumyava Basu’s appointment to lead the international working group of Ocular TB, Sanghamitra Dash’s honoured from the Odisha government, are very encouraging signs for the progress of our six year old Bhubaneswar campus. We are also pleased that, Subho Chakrabarti was appointed to the education steering committee of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO).

One of the areas in our constant attention is research and focus on doing better. Collaboration with leading eye researchers around the world has contributed significantly to our current standing in eye research. An affiliation agreement between the University of Kentucky and our Institute signed during this month adds significantly to this effort and will pave the path for joint programs in many areas mainly with the laboratories of Dr. Jay Krishna Ambati, a world renowned eye researcher whose original contributions to the understanding of some complex problems made a significant impact.

On the education front, yet another batch of Ophthalmology fellows trained in various subspecialties from India and abroad has graduated. Congratulations to all of them. Yet another Low Vision Awareness Program (LAP) was very well attended by ophthalmologists and optometrists. The interns rotating with us from MIT Sloan School of Management and Johns



Hopkins Carey Business School have helped us in analyzing our various management practices that will help us in developing our future approaches. These bright youngsters from many of the business schools working on our projects have certainly added a new dimension to our work.

The goal of any rehabilitation programme is to realize the full potential of an individual. Several clients of our Rehabilitation Centres, who underwent skills training including assistive computer software training (Thanks to support by Mahindra Satyam Foundation), ended up with jobs as probationary officers in the banking sector. This process of training that helps in these clients getting good employment is a very rewarding experience to our entire group.

This month, we have also seen the emergence of a new initiative using the services of satisfied patients or their family members to act as motivators or vision health guardians in their communities. It began with a villager who brought in her two blind children to procure certificates to avail government facilities. On examination, Dr. Niranjan Pehere at our Kode Venkatadri Chowdary campus at Vijayawada found that her six year old daughter could benefit from surgical intervention of her advanced cataract which resulted in a significant improvement of her vision. The child's mother was so excited about the outcome that she started pursuing other families with blind children to seek immediate attention and appropriate care. We are now planning to extend this across the network in a more organized manner.

Finally, TP Das and Savitri Sharma returned to our Hyderabad's Kallam Anji Reddy (KAR) campus after seven years in Bhubaneswar where they both contributed to the creation of a magnificent tertiary care centre filling a great void in the eastern part of India. Welcome back to both of them from the entire KAR crew, even while they will be sorely missed by our Bhubaneswar group.

Gullapalli N Rao