



## July at LVPEI

“Engineering The Eye”, an Innovation workshop in collaboration with Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s (MIT) media lab and Birla Institute of Technology, Pilani (BITS, Pilani) was perhaps the most exciting event this month. Over one hundred students of engineering and technology from all across India were selected to work with the groups from these three institutions to develop fully functional prototypes of equipment that will help in providing high quality care to the millions of people with visual impairment and blindness around the world. The experience offered exciting prospects that led to the decision of creating an “Innovation Lab” at our institute. Space and resources have already been identified with a local philanthropist pledging to support this promising venture. This will be fully functional within three months. The idea will then be to have a lot of individuals with engineering background and students of engineering working with our clinicians and biologists and coming up with innovative solutions to tackle the problem of blindness around the world. Hopefully, this will be a hub for activity with a major impact.

One of the pillars on which our institute was built is the quality of people that are part of our team. We constantly strive to advance the careers of different groups of our colleagues who make significant contribution to our work. One such program is pursuing a doctoral degree in their area of choice, fully funded by our institute. While about a dozen individuals have already received their doctoral degrees, three more individuals joined this elite group this month – Beula Christy, Head of our Rehabilitation Centre, Shobha Mocherla – Head of our Audio Visual Studio and Sannapaneni Krishnaiah, one of our Bio Statisticians. They were awarded PhD by the University of New South Wales in Australia. Beula has already become a leader in her field, Shobha’s work has brought so many laurels to us from all over the world and Krishnaiah played an important role in many educational and research projects. I am sure that this addition to their curriculum vitae will inspire them to aim even higher. This achievement assumes even greater creditability as this was accomplished while continuing in a full time job.

The expansion of our education activities continued this month with the inauguration of the “Pathak Centre for Eye Care Education” at our tertiary care campus in Visakhapatnam (GMR Varalakshmi campus). As in other training campuses, eye care personnel from all cadres will receive training here. Both the teams from the GMR Varalakshmi campus and our Academy for Eye Care Education deserve our compliments. This enhanced capacity for education will make our task easier in meeting ever increasing demand from all over the world. We owe a debt of gratitude to late Mr. Krishna Pathak and his family for their generosity in making this happen. This centre was inaugurated during the seventh annual celebrations of our GMR Varalakshmi Campus, Visakhapatnam on July 7<sup>th</sup>.

Our tertiary care campus in Bhubaneswar also celebrated its seventh anniversary this month. The institute’s management announced the creation of the “Dr. Tara Prasad Das Chair” and Dr. Sujata Das – Director of that campus will be the first recipient. This is a fitting recognition

to TP for his contribution in building and nurturing this campus with utmost passion and dedication. Also in the news was the twenty fourth anniversary of our eye bank, The Ramayamma International Eye Bank. It will now march towards its Silver Jubilee anniversary with the lofty goal of 5000 corneal transplants by the year 2015. The celebration of the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Miriam Hyman Children's Eye Care Centre at our Bhubaneswar campus was particularly delightful. The centre is filling a large gap in children's eye care in this part of the country. Esther Hyman, sister of Miriam Hyman, was with us on this occasion. The story behind this centre is indeed inspirational – how tragedy can be transformed into touching the lives of millions in the long run.

Yet another vision centre, our 95<sup>th</sup> was inaugurated at the Buttayagudem village of West Godavari district. This was again a gift from a local philanthropist combined with a grant from LDS charities. As the local donor is an active industry, there is a large scope to reach the population more easily.

In the clinical care arena, GMR Varalakshmi campus performed the highest number of surgical procedures ever. The entire institute congratulates this dedicated team for this effort.

On the education front, fifteen ophthalmologists completed their ophthalmology fellowship in various sub specialties this month. They will now start the next phase of their careers in various parts of India and few other countries. A new batch of thirty three students was admitted to our school of optometry and the most notable part of this is that thirty one of them are women.

From exciting prospects of innovation to signs of greater gender equity, this month demonstrated many manifestations of what our institute stands for.

Gullapalli N Rao