



December at LVPEI

2014 ended on a high note with December recording our highest ever patient care revenue even while we continued to care for “Every patient that came to our campuses with an eye problem irrespective of the complexity of their case and their paying ability””. This was possible only because of the deeply embedded value of “EQUITY” in our group and carried out by an intense feeling of “Togetherness”. The increasing revenue in the face of ever increasing competition bears testimony to our uncompromising belief in “Excellence” and “Patient First”. Thanks to the entire team, this is a great way to end the year!

Sayan Basu, one of our young clinician-scientists in the cornea service stole the limelight on the research front this month. He, together with Jim Funderburgh at the University of Pittsburgh, demonstrated that stromal stem cells, when injected into the Stroma of scarred corneas, have the potential to clear the corneal opacity. This seminal work, published this month in “Science Translational Medicine” was a subject of wide publicity. The implications of these findings are far reaching and offer the promise of a salutary effect on the massive problem of corneal blindness. It would be of particular value in many developing countries where scarring from infections is the major cause of corneal blindness. Difficulties with eye banking, for long a huge barrier impeding sight restoration from such problems in these countries, can be circumvented if this technique ends up in successful clinical application. Congratulations to Sayan for this superlative work.

While this exciting news emanated from the top of our pyramid, at the bottom, the year end was marked with our score of primary care VISION CENTRES touching 110 with the inauguration of the centre at Narasayapalem village of Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh. One of the better developed villages and very progressive on many scores, this centre is supported locally by a well known orthopedic surgeon from this region and my childhood friend. The family's ancestral home was completely renovated and gifted to us while the equipment and training costs of the technician were part of the funding from LDS Charities of Salt Lake City. Dr. Ratna Babu has also pledged to support the operational costs of the centre for 5 years in addition to an assurance of complete upkeep of the premises and its expansion, if ever required. Indeed the first two weeks had a record response from the surrounding villages. On behalf of the people of this community, we convey our gratitude to all these supporters. This phenomenon of local community support and involvement is one of the most encouraging signs for our rural eye health programmes.

Subhadra Jalali continued her crusade against ROP blindness and was involved in training programmes for ophthalmologists in the state of Bihar, a neglected state for long. During the month, she also brought about a revival of a “lost” surgical procedure, “Open Sky Vitrectomy” for the care of a victim of ROP where current techniques weren't applicable. She visited the pioneer of this technique, Dr. Hirose of Harvard, who pulled out the remnants of the



recordings of the procedure and explained each step of the technique to Subhadra. Happily, the procedure ended in sight restoration.

Continuing Education Programmes in Pediatric Ophthalmology and Lamellar Corneal surgery were conducted during this month. The first one was held in a geographic area where such activities are rare and hence beneficial for ophthalmologists both in practice and training. The second, however, was for a select group of corneal surgeons to introduce them to newer surgical techniques.

The 17th Anniversary of our Jasti V Ramanamma Children's Eye Care Centre in Hyderabad and the 18th anniversary of our first secondary centre in Mudhole were celebrated during this month. Both of these came about because of the faith our partners and supporters had in us. Sightsavers International played a big role in both with the then India Director Nagarajan giving us all the encouragement when the prognosis given by many was poor. PG Michael, Head of CBM at that time was pivotal in our journey into rural eye care. Thanks to all these friends we now have vibrant Programmes in Children's Eye Health as well as innovative and an impactful rural eye health network.

Our rehabilitation group at GMR Varalakshmi campus in Visakhapatnam helped in the training of students with low vision at Andhra University. Our rehabilitation centres have many resources that are proving to be helpful to students of local universities who have low vision. Accessing our digital libraries has become quite common among such students in addition to special training Programmes.

While the year 2014 ended on a high note, 2015 will be year of major growth in all aspects of our work - expanding, extending and delving deeper - and we look forward to it with excitement and anticipation.

- Gullapalli N Rao