



February at LVPEI

The Annual Champalimaud Research symposium affords a great opportunity for our group for intellectual exchange with some of the best scientists in eye and vision research as well as other areas of biology and medicine. Equally important is the chance for our younger colleagues to present their work during the symposium. This year's event on the 2nd of February had Jay Ambati of the University of Kentucky delivering the Annual Champalimaud Lecture on "New Insights into Geographic Atrophy". Jay gave a scintillating lecture, as expected of a clinician scientist of outstanding caliber. This could indeed be a source of inspiration to our young colleagues. Jim Chodosh from Harvard and Mass Eye and Ear Infirmary, Pablo Artal from Universidad de Murcia of Spain, Jim Funderburgh from the University of Pittsburgh, Vijayalakshmi Ravindranath from Indian Institute of Science, Luisa Ribeiro from AIBILI, Coimbra, Portugal and Alladi Suvarna from Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences, Hyderabad constituted the galaxy of speakers with topics ranging from new insights into stem cell biology to whether multilingualism is protective against dementia. We were delighted to have Leonor Beleza, President and Joao Botelho, trustee of the Champalimaud Foundation visit us again (which they do every year), showing their commitment to our partnership. This symposium is getting better each year and this year, it expanded into a full day event. Our research group led by Prof. Balasubramanian was behind organizing all this and kudos to them for yet another great scientific feast.

Ocular Surface Disease manifests in several recalcitrant forms and in countries like India, the presentation at an advanced stage, increases the complexity of care. A unique workshop combining didactics, case discussions and surgical demonstrations in tackling these disorders was organized for a week, preceding the Champalimaud symposium. This covered the entire spectrum of modern treatment modalities from stem cell therapy to Keratoprosthesis. I am happy that our cornea group has evolved into "comprehensive" cornea centres covering all aspects of clinical care, education, research and product development. Virender Sangwan and his group orchestrated this and our compliments to them.

The entry of a new batch of research graduate students and fellows is welcome news and it is the energy, exuberance and brilliance of these that will continue to keep our research effort vibrant. Some of these students are pursuing their doctoral program with either the University of Hyderabad or the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS, Pilani). Together with our scientist group, this has become an ever growing part of our activities.

At the other end of the spectrum was the visit to Liberia, at the invitation of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, to have discussions about our Institute playing a role in creating a functional eye health system in their country. The most positive feature is the interest at the Head of state level to make a difference. A set of recommendations have been submitted and more detailed plans are being developed. It is indeed a great delight to work with this outstanding lady, a Nobel peace Laureate and the first Woman African Head of State. While this is a new dimension to our work, we are excited about the possibilities while being fully cognizant of the inherent challenges.



Our plans to replicate our model of eye care delivery in rural areas got a further boost with the memoranda signed with two charitable trusts - Savitri Waney Charitable Foundation of UK and Naraindas Morbai Budhrani Trust of Mumbai through the support of 'Mission for Vision'. These groups will fund the development of two secondary centres taking our tally to three secondary centres in the pipeline, in the underserved state of Odisha in India. We are grateful to the trustees of these organizations for their munificence. Taraprasad Das deserves all credit for leading this effort so successfully.

Awards of new grants for our rehabilitation group from Microsoft and additional grants from Seva Foundation's "Global Sight Initiative" are gratefully acknowledged.

This month again, we had our share of laurels, this time from the All India Ophthalmological Society at its annual meeting. These ranged from best papers to the highest honour given by this organization, "Adenwala Oration" to Taraprasad Das. Subhadra Jalali delivered the "Dr. P. Siva Reddy Gold Medal Oration" and Sujata Das was honoured with "Dr. B.K. Narayan Rao Oration Award". We are all happy for the national level recognition to these members of our family.

Before I close, let me also wish our Trustee and Founder and Chairman Emeritus of Tata Consultancy Services, Dr. F.C. Kohli a wonderful 90th birthday and many happy returns. We are at once inspired and humbled by his extraordinary accomplishments and his continuing zeal to make our world better.

Gullapalli N Rao