



March at LVPEI

As the financial year came to a close on March 31st, we were greeted with the news that would make anyone happy – we recorded the highest ever monthly revenue from patient care. That this was achieved was without compromising on our commitment to equity - providing care free of cost to the economically underprivileged - is a testimony to the dedication of our team. Both cumulatively for the entire network and individually for many of our campuses, this was a record month. This set the right tone for the year 2014-15 when we project the highest ever capital spending till date with significant expansion across our pyramidal network. Thanks to the entire crew that made this possible.

Brien Holden Vision Institute (BHVI and its previous incarnations) has been one of our greatest supporters for well nearly the past quarter century. Of the many areas they have helped in our capacity building, contact lens is the predominant one. This encompassed patient care, education and research. Together with this group, we have initiated a novel contact lens education program through basic as well as advanced courses in contact lenses for ophthalmologists and optometrists across the country. At a time when the standard of contact lens practice was not optimal across most of India, the Indian Contact Lens Education Program (ICLEP) helped many practitioners from all parts of India and helped to bring change in this field. During this month we had the **ICLEP Gold**, the fiftieth course in the series, and making it one of the longest running contact lens education programs. 144 eye care professionals from across the country have attended this program. Several of the alumni have become teachers and enhanced the impact of this program. Donna La Hood from BHVI deserves special credit. She set up the entire structure and rigour for the course, and personally helped to run it during the initial years. We would like to place on record our appreciation to Donna, Rob Tenry and Brien Holden for this gesture and to Bausch & Lomb for their generosity in supporting this throughout this period.

One recalcitrant challenge plaguing our patient care is long waiting time for our patients and numerous attempts made to correct this have only yielded limited success. More recently, our vice chair G Chandra Sekhar (GC) has begun to work with the MIT Sloan School to understand the dynamics behind this problem and identify better ways of improving the situation. Students from the school have investigated different aspects and are working to arrive at some solutions. The batch last month was here to take this further. Together, the attempt is to apply “system dynamics” approach to correct the situation.

With the three new vision centres inaugurated during this month, our tally has now reached 103. LDS Charities of Salt Lake City and Lavelle Fund of New York have been our biggest contributors to building our vision centres network for primary eye care. We were delighted to have Dr. and Mrs. Ferguson from the U.S representing the LDS Charities of Salt Lake City visiting us this month. Their expression of interest in extending the collaboration based on their observations was quite reassuring.



In the area of education in community eye health, we are moving along pretty well with online courses. Four online courses were started for the Masters in Community Eye Health (MCEH) program this month with 19 students from different parts of the world enrolling. Sheela Devi, Head of the Community Eye Health Education programs of our institute (Ramachandra Pararajasegaram Centre) was in Sydney to organize a workshop on community eye health and to help develop these online courses. Several of the alumni of these programs are now in leadership positions from district to state level.

The recent establishment of Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust and its decision to support the avoidable blindness programs in the countries of the British Commonwealth has given a big boost to VISION 2020 - The Right to Sight programs in these countries. We are pleased to be part of Commonwealth Eye Health Consortium initiated by the International Centre for Eye Health (ICEH) of London with funding from the trust. Through this we will be providing fellowship training in clinical areas of ophthalmology and participating in research programs.

Uncorrected refractive error is the leading cause of visual impairment in the world and one of the fundamental requirements to tackle this problem is availability of appropriately trained human resources. The establishment of a school of optometry as part of our institute with support from Bausch & Lomb was aimed at training several cadres of professionals to address this problem including optometrists, ophthalmic technicians and vision technicians. The school has been quite successful in attracting good quality students. Over the past five years, the faculty has been considerably strengthened. So when the school was adjudged as the **Best Optometry School in India** it was a great cause for celebration. We compliment everybody who are involved in making this possible - the supporters, the faculty, other staff and the students. We are indebted to Bausch & Lomb for the funding to build the school, many friends at Brien Holden Vision Institute, University of New South Wales and University of Waterloo, Canada who helped in setting this up on a solid foundation. Affiliation with the prestigious Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), Pilani is an additional strength.

Prof. Seyed Hasnain, currently at Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi has been one of our long term trustees and supporters. Recently, Seyed was conferred the prestigious and the highest civilian award "Bundesverdienstkreuz, 1 Klasse" by the German Government on the 11th of March. Congratulations to Prof. Hasnain for this signal honour.

Gullapalli N Rao