



## September at LVPEI

There are many numbers we can celebrate this month – highest volumes, highest revenues and others in many centres across our network. But the one that sets us apart is the number of corneal transplants performed at our Hyderabad campus – 189. This monthly volume has probably never been matched anywhere in the world. While our Kallam Anji Reddy campus in Hyderabad is the largest corneal transplantation centre in the world already, the ever increasing volume bears testimony to the incredible work of our cornea and eye bank teams combined with the commitment of operating room staff. This has significant impact on service, education and research. In addition, these successes become powerful tools of advocacy as there can be no better evidence for the need to promote organ transplantation in countries like India. Congratulations to Somasheila Murthy, Head of Cornea service and her team.

One of our major areas of enhanced activity and growth is Research, made possible through a combination of additional infrastructure and more scientific talent. Shivaji is an eminent experimental microbiologist who led the group at the prestigious Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology for many years. His recent move to work with us has strengthened our research team considerably. It was indeed a proud moment for us this month when he received the coveted "Carl Woese Memorial Award" from the Association of Microbiologists in India, their highest honour. Congratulations to Shivaji for this well-deserved recognition. With his presence, we are already looking at some "out of the box" projects related to infections in the eye.

While on the subject of Awards & Accolades, this month was one of numerous honours, awards and named orations by a number of our team members. To all of them, a big "Thank you" for being such great ambassadors of our work and congratulations for the distinction each of them achieved.

In the area of education, we have begun the process of capacity building of residency training in medical colleges, the aim being assisting the process of enhancing the quality of residency training. The pilot project has been launched with one programme started this month and two groups are working to make it a robust programme. Once this is achieved with all the critical components in place, this will be scaled up. There is demand for such assistance from us from several medical colleges and we are approaching it in a methodical way that will ensure desired results. The potential impact is immense. The team, led by Prashant Garg, is involved in this.

Our community eye health group recorded the larger volumes of patients at both levels of secondary care and primary care vision centres. The second arm of the "Andhra Pradesh Eye Diseases Study (APEDS3)" is completed with now only one other arm left. This very significant longitudinal study offers the promise of very critical information on the changes in the epidemiology of blindness and visual impairment. We developed the LVPEI pyramidal model of



eye care delivery on the basis of knowledge from APEDS-I and this study now will provide us the basis for any changes that we need to make in our strategic direction.

We always pride ourselves on how our group spots talent and promotes it. The story of Mahesh Thogari is worth writing about. A high school graduate from one of the least developed districts of the state, he had dropped out of advanced education twice for financial reasons and ended up as part of our security staff in Hyderabad. On knowing about his background, our security Head, Shivashankar and his assistant, Nageswara Rao, encouraged him to seek admission at our "Vision Technician" course. He was admitted and completed the programme as the topper of his class. After about 18 months in that position in which he excelled in providing primary eye care from one of our vision centres, he was promoted to be a coordinator for a cluster of ten vision centres. This steep curve in his progress is an indication of a bright future for this young man, very much akin to two earlier examples who ended up with a Ph.D. from the University of New South Wales. All these tales of lives we are able to touch through service and through providing opportunities for personal advancement illustrate how we reconcile "Excellence" with "Equity", "so that all may see".

Gullapalli N Rao