



## August at LVPEI

Excessive tearing, often quite an annoyance that also blurs the vision is a common problem. This is usually caused by some form of abnormalities of tear drainage. It is also a fact that a significant proportion of affected individuals never get relief even with different interventions. One of our younger colleagues has developed a major interest in this subject and is now developing a "Centre of Dacryology" in our Institute. Javed Ali is a brilliant clinician - scientist and is exploring the underlying mechanisms of various anomalies of lacrimal system to develop effective interventions. In a short duration of three years since completion of his training, he is recognized worldwide for his work and received the prestigious "Merrill Reeh Pathology Award" from the American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (ASOPRS)" recently. This was followed by five of his articles appearing in a single issue of the "Journal of Ophthalmic Plastics & Reconstructive Surgery (OPRS)", a rare feat indeed. Javed is an inspiration to many of us in our Institute in so many ways. In addition to excelling in ophthalmology, he has varied interests that make him a real outlier. I am sure that with his zeal, his quest to solve many mysteries of lacrimal system will result in relief to millions.

Also in the news was Subhadra Jalali, when her publication on her pioneering work in tackling "Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP)" received the platinum award from the Indian Journal of Ophthalmology given annually to the best paper. Congratulations to Subhadra not only for this but also for the impact of her work in averting blindness in thousands of premature babies in the Hyderabad community where she set up a robust surveillance system in all neonatal intensive care units. In addition, she trained scores of ophthalmologists through whom the indirect impact is even greater.

Our group continues to play major leadership roles at all levels and congratulations to T P Das for his election as President of the Asia Pacific Vitreo Retina Society (APVRS). TP is indeed the architect of our vibrant Retina services across our network that encompasses service, education, research, advocacy and policy, developed over the past more than two decades.

All these above developments have a strong base in our commitment to research not only in our Institute but to promote it across India and other developing countries. We hosted the annual meeting of the India-ARVO chapter (Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology) with active participation from across India. This is a successor to "Indian Eye Research Group", which we founded over twenty years ago. Several paper and poster presentations, two eponymous lectures and discussions constituted the content. This meeting is growing steadily into a forum for cross fertilization among researchers of diverse backgrounds and interests in eye and vision research.

Special kudos to Virender Sangwan for his inclusion in the selection committee of the most prestigious awards in science in India, the "Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award". Virender himself was a recipient of this award many years ago. We are proud that all three clinical ophthalmologists who ever received this award were from our Institute for the work done here.



While all this on the research frontier is exciting, our commitment to the neglected populations in remote areas continues unabated with setting up of more primary care vision centres and secondary care centres with excellent clinical infrastructure and trained team. This number this month has grown to 14 secondary and 124 primary care vision centres. This translates to an additional million getting excellent comprehensive eye care at secondary level and three pockets of 50,000 each in remote rural communities with primary eye care. Thanks to all our team members who toil without interruptions in this crusade. Many generous individuals and organisations made this a reality through their financial support and we are indebted to all of them.

Yet another area of great satisfaction is the progress of our Ramayamma International Eye Bank. The march towards realization of our vision of getting 10000 corneas per annum by 2020 is encouraging with continuing support from the state governments. We secured approvals to initiate "Hospital Cornea Retrieval Programme (HCRP)" in two more hospitals this month in the famous temple city of Tirupati in the southern part of Andhra Pradesh. The team is in training and the programme will start soon. Thanks to the eye banking team led by Hariharan and Sunita Chaurasia, this was possible. It is the concept of HCRP, that we adopted from the U.S, over twenty years ago, that helped us to establish a very successful eye banking system in Hyderabad which has become a model for the country.

In education, new batches of students in several of our Programmes including community eye health, ophthalmology, optometry, patient counseling came from all across India and a few counties abroad. The vibrancy of our education activity continued to receive added support from outstanding visiting Professors and lecturers through this month. We are grateful to all of them for their contributions.

Cataract and Refractive surgeries were further upgraded this month and our partnership with the German company, Gebauer, produced some impressive outcomes with potential for newer ways of performing corneal and refractive surgery. I am delighted that this initiative of Virender Sangwan is ably nurtured by Pravin Krishna into a very exciting prospect.

Let me close by narrating the story of a 13 year of girl from Sri Lanka. She developed a serious eye problem from a reaction to usage of some drugs for an infection. Through efforts of a local NGO, funds were mobilised and she was transported to our Institute. A diagnosis of Stevens Johnson Syndrome (SJS) was made and with a combination of a surgical procedure and fitting with a special type of contact lens (scleral lens), her condition was ameliorated successfully. The girl's vision improved significantly and she is symptom free. This one story exemplified the application of cutting edge knowledge to alleviate human suffering transcending geographic boundaries.

- Gullapalli N. Rao