



## November at LVPEI

The inauguration of the new building dedicated to patient care, named after the mother of the major donor, “Velamati Sowbhagyavathamma Building”, housing all the outpatient and surgical services of our Hyderabad campus, was the major highlight of November. The donor Mr. Velamati Janardan Rao, a successful entrepreneur and philanthropist, inaugurated the building on the 9<sup>th</sup> of this month. Another delightful feature of fund raising for the building was the spontaneous support from the families of our group with the sister and brother-in-law of our Vice-Chair, Dr. G. Chandrasekhar (GC), providing support for one floor (with the floor being named after the ophthalmologist father of GC) and another floor receiving support from two surgeon nephews of ours from the US (sons of Pratibha’s sister and brother-in-law, with the floor being named after their parents). This culture of giving in the families of our group is very heart warming. Three other long term friends and supporters of the Institute, who run very successful business ventures, helped with the remaining three floors. A number of other supporters of LVPEI added substantially to this fund. To all of them, we are deeply indebted.

The product is a spectacular looking building, appreciated by many. A green building incorporating all the recommendations of the “National Centre for Accessible Environments” had made patient safety and comfort a priority. Along with the state of the art equipment, this new facility further augments our quality. Another feature was the large boulders that were unearthed below the foundation. From the extensive work done by Prof. Balasubramanian (Balu), Director of Research through consultation with geological experts, these rocks were found to be about 2.5 billion years old. This is what we inherited as part of the famous “Hyderabad rocks”. Our Artist-in-Residence, Surya Prakash’s ingenuity worked magic with these and created beautiful murals and landscaping around these. This, together with the spectacular atrium connecting the two buildings and the Children' Eye Care Centre, were the special attractions of the new building. This expansion will increase the patient volumes by about 75 percent on this campus. The original building is now under renovation, and will double the space for education, research, rehabilitation along with accommodating the addition of the new Innovation Centre. Not surprisingly, we seem to be scrambling for more space already. To all our friends, a warm welcome to visit this “new look” of our Hyderabad’s Kallam Anji Reddy Campus.

The annual meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology was held this month. While this is one meeting I would never like to miss, unrelenting upper respiratory tract infection prevented my attendance, only the third time since I first attended this in 1977. However, there was significant representation from the Institute with multiple presentations including invited ones. Congratulations are due to our colleagues who received the Senior Honour Award and the Honour Awards of the Academy for their contributions to the Academy's educational activities. Since the entire ophthalmic world is at this meeting, it also provided opportunities for many interactions with collaborators – the present and the possible future care.



November also is the month when India celebrates "Children's Day" in memory of the country's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. A series of events happened across the network involving children, including painting competitions etc. the participation was extremely encouraging. We also celebrated the "World Neonatal Day" having made "neonatal eye care" a focus area of our activities.

Our primary care "Vision Centre" score has gone up to 127 with the inauguration of two more vision centres this month. While on the subject of rural eye health, I wish to acknowledge the contribution of Mr. P. G. Michael, former head of international NGO, CBM in India, who encouraged and prodded me into creating models of comprehensive eye care in rural and tribal areas. Michael passed away during this month at the age of 85; the LVPEI family deeply mourns this loss of a passionate advocate for combating avoidable blindness and for realising the full potential of those with irreversible low vision or blindness.

Several eminent individuals visited us this month to foster our education programmes as well as collaboration in education, research and product development. These gifts of "talent and time" are deeply appreciated.

I conclude this communication with the story of a father of two from the state of Kerala, victim of a form of eye cancer, Retinoblastoma. He lost one eye and was left with only partial vision in the other. Sadly for him, this story repeated with his first born. For his second born, they were prepared for the worst and true to their apprehensions, this girl was diagnosed with retinoblastoma in both eyes. The eight-day old baby was rushed to our Institute and to everyone's happiness; both eyes could be saved with complete restoration of vision in one eye and partial vision in the other. What better happiness can one have than such examples? It was parental awareness and early intervention by highly competent professionals using the most appropriate approach that made all the difference.

- Gullapalli N. Rao