



January at LVPEI

A decade is not a long time in the history of an institution but when this can bring about transformation, like in the case of our Bhubaneswar campus and its influence on eye care in the state of Odisha, it is noteworthy. When we decided to foray outside our state about a dozen years ago, Odisha was a natural choice because of its proximity and the tremendous need for quality eye care services in that state. Our colleague, TP Das, was ready to lead this project and he plunged into it with great passion, creating a magnificent campus. Much progress has been made, many hundreds of thousands were touched, education programmes proliferated and the seeds for good quality research were sown. Added to these are our rural eye health initiatives, with the inauguration of three secondary care rural centres in the past year. The celebration of the tenth anniversary of this campus was a colorful event with the Chief Minister of the state, Mr. Naveen Patnaik, as the Chief Guest. He has been a major pillar of support throughout this period. Congratulations to Sujata Das and her team on this occasion and to TP Das for the wonderful manifestation of his vision. We recall with gratitude the major support from Operation Eyesight Universal of Canada with additional support from Navabharat Ventures, BHP Billiton, and National Thermal Power Corporation, to which many others have contributed in subsequent years. We are indebted to all of them.

What better way to celebrate this milestone than the graduation ceremony of all our eye health trainees of all cadres. This and a weeklong visit of Prof. Harminder Dua of the University of Nottingham, a world renowned expert on corneal problems, as Visiting Professor; as well as a continuing education programme on cornea and skills transfer for advanced corneal transplantation techniques, brought to a close the eventful first decade of this campus. Both the ophthalmology and optometry alumni groups had their reunions.

Another major highlight was the “Annual Champalimaud Research Symposium” where we have a combination of invited lectures from renowned researchers from around the world and our own group. The “Champalimaud Lecture” was delivered by Prof. Sir Peng Khaw, an internationally renowned glaucoma specialist from the world famous Moorfields Eye Hospital in London. Prof. Khaw is one among the only four ophthalmologists who were Knighted in the past century, and one of the two for public service. As always, this was scintillating presentation. Other invited speakers came from Netherlands and Belgium.

Dr. Leonor Beleza, President of the Champalimaud Foundation was present along with Mr. Joao Botelho, Senior Board Member of the Foundation. We are grateful that they have made this a regular part of their annual calendar. Sir Peng Khaw spent an additional two days in interacting with our clinical and research groups. We are thankful to him for sparing so much time for us.

At the top of our pyramid in Hyderabad, we inaugurated our new surgical centre at our Kallam Anji Reddy campus. This state of the art facility will increase our surgical capacity on this campus by around 70 percent. We are grateful for the financial support from Meena and Kishore Kothapalli, long term friends and supporters of our Institute. The centre is named after Kishore's father, Mr. Kothapalli Rama Rao, one of the most active advocates of our Institute, which is an added bonus for us. He invited us more than two decades ago to assist in the



creation of a high quality rural secondary centre and that experience gave us the necessary competence to build our rural eye health model in subsequent years.

We are pleased whenever our donors visit us and this month Soona and Edward Brown of France visited the David Brown Children's Eye Care Centre at our Vijayawada campus, and the Edward and Soona Brown Eye Centre in the rural area of Dhulipalla in Guntur district. They have funded both these projects.

Visits by policymakers add to the success of our advocacy efforts and when someone at the rank of a Central Cabinet Minister visits a primary care vision centre, it becomes a great endorsement of our model of vision centre that we developed over two decades ago, now getting replicated internationally. Mr. Ashok Gajapati Raju, Central Civil Aviation Minister and from the royalty of Vizianagaram, visited our vision centre in their home district and complimented the staff for the services. This and other forms of advocacy efforts are having an impact on such critical issues as gender equity in health care. In 2015, 52 per cent of our patients and 56 per cent of surgical patients in our rural centres were women. Increased awareness coupled with accessibility to available services at an affordable or no cost, made this possible.

Several of our secondary and vision centres had their anniversaries and among them the Edward and Soona Brown Eye Centre in Dhulipalla, celebrated its first anniversary.

The inclusion of our Institute in the CEO post of Microsoft as one of the eleven global stories selected by its CEO, Satya Nadella, was an exciting development. The collaboration with the global technology giant is an exciting development for us during 2015 in the areas of "business intelligence" and "machine learning". The potential appears endless. Thanks to our colleague, Vipin Das, an ophthalmologist and a technology geek for building this collaboration. We are on the verge of a new era when our infrastructure and skilled human resources, coupled with deployment of new technology, can enhance our impact many fold.

The story of a 42 year old lady, Lakshmi, illustrates how simple and effective care in remote areas can transform a life. Lakshmi was very gifted in handicrafts from her childhood but could never pursue this in her younger years due to family responsibilities. Through a chance meeting with a survey team, she was selected for additional training in her vocation and soon became a trainer herself. She was forced to give this up due to severe eye strain and headache for which she did not seek proper care. A comprehensive eye exam conducted by our team involved in an epidemiologic survey in her geographic area revealed a simple problem of presbyopia. Correction with appropriate spectacles not only improved her vision but also allowed her to resume her passion. At her last visit, she gifted one of her products to the survey team. Uncorrected presbyopia (problem with near vision) affects around half a billion people in the world most of whom go uncorrected. This is despite the availability of simple, effective and cost-effective solutions. But in this case, we are happy that our system could reach and help this talented lady.

- Gullapalli N Rao