



February at LVPEI

Eye banking has become one of our Institute's greatest achievements. The Ramayamma International Eye Bank at our Hyderabad campus is India's largest and one of the largest in the world. It covers the entire spectrum of eye banking that includes harvesting, processing and distributing corneas as well as education of all cadres of eye banking personnel, research, planning, policy, advocacy and capacity building. This has made the state of Telangana one of the leading states in eye banking. Andhra Pradesh is another state where we have a major presence but the eye banking system is yet to evolve to optimal levels in this state. With the support and encouragement of the state government, we have embarked on a state-wide initiative "Andhra Pradesh Eye Banking Initiative" to correct this situation. The first step in this direction was taken this month with the official launch of the programme from the city of Vijayawada, just outside the upcoming new capital city, by the Chief Minister, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu. A new international standard eye bank will be developed as a nodal eye bank for the state on our campus in Vijayawada as part our recently inaugurated "Tej Kohli Cornea Institute (TKCI)". The vision is to reach a goal of harvesting 2000 corneas annually by the year 2020. Global Eye Banking leader, SightLife of Seattle, will be our technical partner. Hospital Cornea Retrieval Programme (HCRP) with the help of grief counsellors will be set up in all major hospitals in the area. We are grateful to the Chief Minister and Mr. Tej Kohli for their support.

The above launch coincided with the fifth anniversary of our tertiary care campus in Vijayawada (Kode Venkatadri Chowdary Campus). In addition to the eye bank, we had the formal inauguration of the "Education Centre" of the campus. This includes ophthalmology fellowships, internship for optometrists, vision technician and ophthalmic nurse assistant (ONA) training. All this will add to our vision of tripling the capacity of our education programmes by 2020.

A key component of TKCI is capacity building, both nationally and internationally, to combat corneal blindness. Our team visited Oman at their invitation to both offer a course on "corneal problems" and also to provide guidance in building high quality corneal services in that country. This type of global outreach to help local capacity building has the potential for great long term benefits. Yet another programme is potential collaboration with "Mexican Institute of Ophthalmology" following discussions with their leadership during our visit to Mexico this month.

One more primary care vision centre was added during this month. One such is in the state of Odisha, developed entirely on the support of the local community, who were persistent in their efforts to get us into their community when we were hesitant. This kind of involvement is the key to the success of such centres.

Our first secondary centre in Odisha state supported by Dalmia family at Rajgangpur celebrated its first anniversary and the low vision services were inaugurated at this centre.

Contd..2



A technological advancement made by Jean-Marie Parel at the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute and adopted by us is the "Drone Slit Lamp". We have begun the application of this at our secondary centre in Paloncha connecting it to the main campus in Hyderabad. With the help of this, experts can examine a patient remotely and offer necessary advice. This will enhance our care in rural and tribal areas to a higher level of quality through our secondary and primary vision centres. This, together with some breakthrough improvements by our innovation and engineering research groups, offers promise of greater reach and better care to these neglected communities. Thanks to Jean-Marie and our teams led by Mukesh Taneja and Ashutosh Richhariya for these significant breakthroughs.

As our Technology Innovation Centre, part of our innovation programme, "Srujana", moves into its sparkling new home on the main campus, news of its first product "Pediatric Perimeter" getting the "Bio-Asia Innovation Award" is a cause for a big celebration indeed. Congratulations to PremNandhini Satgunam and the innovation team. We are optimistic that the new facilities will enable more of such distinctions in future.

Let me conclude with the inclusion of a letter from the parent of a visually challenged child on his experience in the "Mobility and Sensory Stimulation Park" at our Vijayawada campus, created with support from Microsoft.

"I wanted to share the wonderful experience with my 11 month old son Achintya at the Sensory Garden in LVPEI Vijayawada. He has CVI (Cortical Visual Impairment) and gets easily overwhelmed in public spaces. When Dr. Pehere suggested we take him to the garden, to our surprise he started to enjoy the experience. The garden is peaceful with good areas of shade and sun. He loved the white geese, which are well contrasted with the brown soil, and their unique honking sound and movement that caught his attention. He reached out for the different texture of the red flowers and loved the sound of water. Next time, if he is able to walk, I would want him to explore the sand pit, the boat and the plants – on his own, under our supervision. I compliment the team that designed and implemented the garden." Indeed, these experiences justify our existence.

- Gullapalli N Rao