



March 2017 at LVPEI

March 31 is the end of our Institute's functional year coinciding with India's financial year. This past year has been one of the most productive years on all fronts. Patient volumes reached a record high, both for the entire network as well as for most of the individual campuses; an Institute of Excellence for Vision Rehabilitation was inaugurated; 16 primary care Vision Centres were added; space for research and education doubled; record number of corneas were harvested by our eye bank; many accolades were received from many sources; and the year ended with a sound financial health for the Institute.

A record number of 2043 corneal transplants performed during the year at our Hyderabad campus was a matter of great joy for us and a cause for celebration. This may be the highest ever anywhere in the world from a single Centre. This is a milestone in eye care for our country too, as India for long has been considered a country where corneal transplantation was considered an impossible dream. With this the total number of corneal transplants at this campus reached 23,901 since inception on June 1, 1987. For this superlative performance, the Executive Head of our Ramayamma International Eye Bank, Hariharan, was awarded the "Eye Banker of the Year Award" and the Eye Bank was selected as the first member of the "3000+ transplant club" by the SightLife India. Hari has done an admirable job in expanding our "Hospital Cornea Retrieval Programme" that we have adopted for the first time in India over 25 years ago, to several major hospitals in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Indeed, the eye banking component of our Tej Kohli Cornea Institute has always been a trail blazer. All this happened on the foundation of a robust corneal transplantation system including the development of an international standard eye bank (biggest in India now). Creation of high quality infrastructure for clinical and support services together with world class expertise were other critical factors in this achievement.

In the recent past, we have initiated education programmes for referring ophthalmologists on the care of corneal transplants, employing modern methods of education and technology. The existing comprehensive cornea service covering diagnosis and treatment of all corneal problems has now evolved into an Institute of Excellence "The Tej Kohli Cornea Institute". With the generous support of Mr. Kohli, we are working towards a major initiative to eliminate needless corneal blindness globally along with a cluster of national and international partners. In the past year, this model has also been replicated to develop Institutes of Excellence in other areas of eye care to combat the other major causes of blindness and vision impairment globally.

One aspect of our work in cornea that received much attention has been the research and clinical translation in the area of stem cell transplantation. Simple Epithelial Transplantation (SLET) developed by our group has placed this very useful procedure within the surgical armamentarium of more ophthalmologists without the need for complex and expensive stem cell laboratories. Clinical results published from around the world were very encouraging. A video film made on this technique, under the supervision of Virender Sangwan by a fellow on one-month rotation at LVPEI from the Wills Eye Institute, Philadelphia, has been honoured as the grand prize winner in the Global video contest of the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

In addition, Jay Kumar Chhablani's video "Intraocular Cysticercosis" has been awarded the first rank in this global video contest, and three more videos by Dr Chhablani were among the top videos in this contest. Congratulations to all these award winners. At the Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology meeting in Singapore, we had a significant presence with multiple presentations and several honours. Our Vice-



Chair, Tarapasrad Das delivered the prestigious William Holmes Lecture. We applaud all these individuals for the honours received.

One of our major focus areas has been "Neonatal Eye Health", particularly focused on the problem of "Retinopathy of Prematurity" (ROP). Subhadra Jalali, who heads this initiative, did some pioneering work in setting up surveillance systems in neonatal intensive care units in all children's hospitals and units of Hyderabad to prevent blindness from ROP. She also developed a similar programme for the government hospitals in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, in addition to training numerous ophthalmologists and capacity development of programmes for the care of ROP from across India and other countries. This month, through the generosity of Mr. M. H. Dalmia of Delhi, this activity was formally launched in the state of Odisha and it will be led by Tapas Padhi, who returned after spending a year with Michael Trease at Beaumont and the University of Michigan. All this will be part of our programme entitled "Neonatal Eye Health Alliance". The Bhubaneswar component will be named "The Abba Dalmia Newborn Eye Health Alliance (NEHA)" in Honour of Smt Abba Dalmia and Shri M H Dalmia, former President of OCL India Ltd for their support.

Pediatric Perimeter that was developed by our vision scientist, Premnandhini Satgunam, continues to get a lot of attention and has been selected to be showcased at the Festival of Innovation, March 4 – 10, 2017, at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Delhi (Indian Presidential House).

The new building (Velamati Soubhagyavathamma building) on our main campus (Kallam Anji Reddy campus) in Hyderabad received the 9th CIDC Vishwakarma Award in the 'Best Project' category along with 36 projects across India, from the Construction Industry Development Council (CIDC). We are delighted that this new dimension has been added to the many accolades that our group has been privileged to receive. While it has been a regular feature to receive the "Best Garden Awards" for most of our campuses, this was the first recognition for the building and construction. "Greenery, Aesthetics, Art and Cleanliness" have always been very important components of our Institute, a tradition we cherish.

Much to our delight, the entire rural eye health network of our Institute is digitized with all the 140+ centres connected with real time data made available and tele-consultation enabled through the cloud. The entire project was completed in three months' time. My compliments to Anthony Vipin Das and his team for this successful launch.

The story of four year old Pruthvi is touching. Delayed diagnosis of congenital cataract caused vision loss to his parents. Realizing the risk involved, Pruthvi's parents got his eye condition evaluated soon after birth which led to cataract surgery at the tender age of six weeks and subsequent sight restoration. Surgery for congenital cataract is more complex than cataract surgery in adults requiring expertise, multiple specialists and expensive equipment. We are delighted that Pruthvi benefitted from the services offered through our model of delivery at no cost. Today, little Pruthvi at his tender age is the guide and escort to his parents. This reminded me of the great sculpture in front of the headquarters building of World Health Organization in Geneva depicting an elderly African person blind from river blindness escorted by a child. Sight restoration can positively impact individuals, families and larger communities as exemplified in this case.

- Gullapalli N Rao