

## **April 2017 at LVPEI**

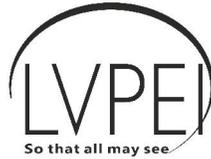
Majuli is an island of about 80,000 people on the river Brahmaputra in the Northeastern state of Assam in India. It is one of the remotest parts of the country, connected to the mainland only by boats for transportation, long neglected, and health care facilities almost nonexistent. On a visit with one of our partner hospitals in the city of Jorhat in Assam, I was privileged to travel to this beautiful island. The journey on the boat on this mighty river was reminiscent of the experience I had a few years ago on the Amazon when I had visited the renowned Brazilian ophthalmologist, Rubens Belfort, and his group in that region. What made me immensely happy was the presence of a "Vision Centre" on this island developed by Dr. Narayan Bordoloi, a well-known Assamese ophthalmologist. Narayan has been partnering with us for over a decade and we have participated in his impressive journey. This practicing ophthalmologist took upon himself to create educational facilities for eye care personnel in that state, which is in desperate need for trained Human Resources; and he also went a step further in taking the challenge of providing quality primary eye care through this vision centre. That our "Vision Centre" model is reaching far and wide, and serving its purpose of caring for underserved and neglected populations, is a cause for celebration. This was indeed the purpose underlying the concept of "Vision Centre" - Quality primary eye care for ALL people in remote rural and tribal areas. Congratulations to Narayan for becoming an example of what an enlightened ophthalmologist can do.

Meanwhile, our Institute's tally of Vision Centre's exceeded 150 with three more Centre's inaugurated during the month taking the total to 151. This programme of developing robust "primary eye health" in the three states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha is a major strategy of our Institute; and is progressing on schedule. The three new centers were the product of support from RayBan Sun Optics India for capital expenditure and the space provided by local supporters. This increasing local participation in this important component of eye health augurs well for the future sustainability of primary eye health. The recent partnerships with technology corporations and the products coming out of our Innovation Centre with high probability will make this care even better and reach more people. We are also currently engaged in discussions with three state governments to introduce Vision Centres in the government sector in these states. The Vision Centre model has manifested in many forms under different organizations.

This month has also seen the completion of technology integration of our entire network from the remote Vision Centers to the Centre of Excellence in our pyramid. This facilitates service, education and research in a significant way. Compliments to the digital and public health groups of our Institute for completing this on a mission mode.

The bilateral UK-India Researcher links workshop was organized by our Institute and the University of Sheffield this month, sponsored by the British Council and the Royal Society of Chemistry. Over 30 early career researchers participated from both countries in this workshop on "Application of innovative chemistry and biomaterials to treat corneas damaged by trauma, disease and infection". The outcomes of such research endeavors will again help to develop products that are affordable to everyone; as well as to improve drug delivery systems so that compliance will increase significantly.

Our Institute for Rehabilitation was delighted with the news of many of our clients coming out with flying colors in Class X exams. The care that is given by our team in preparing them for these tests is laudable. In our Vijayawada Tertiary care campus (Kode Venkatadri Chowdary campus), the infrastructure for



computer education of those with visual disability was enhanced and an additional instructor hired, making it possible to train two batches of students each day.

Merle Fernandes was in Mandalay, Myanmar, as part of our Tej Kohli Cornea Institute's capacity building programme for international partners. The visit included clinical and didactic instruction with hands on surgical training as a component. We are pleased that this outreach to dent needless corneal blindness in this country is progressing well. Staff members from this hospital are currently undergoing training with us in eye banking and microbiology

While on the subject of cornea, the news that our Eye Bank in Visakhapatnam (Mohsin Eye Bank) exceeded the 100 mark in the harvesting of corneas this month is encouraging. This movement is in the right direction to achieve our strategic objectives in eye banking and corneal blindness related work.

Our work through our Community Eye Health group (Gullapalli Pratibha Rao Centre for Advancement of Rural Eye care) and Child Sight Institute in screening children in rural areas is showing notable progress. In the programme linked to our Naraindas Morbai Budhrani Eye Centre, the secondary Centre in Rayagada of Odisha, over 160,000 children were screened, 215 teachers were trained and all those with any vision and eye related problems were referred to appropriate levels of care in our network. There is significant support from the state government at the district level for this programme.

Our "Green LVPEI" project has been advancing well with installation of solar power generation systems in two other secondary centers. This will decrease the costs of power for these centers, and also ensures uninterrupted power supply. My compliments to Manoj Edakkatil and his team for this steady forward movement.

All this progress can translate to real impact only when the human element of our Institute consistently works towards our value of "Patient First". Dr. Kazi in our Bhubaneswar campus went beyond the call of duty by tracing a 90 year old patient who didn't come for postoperative follow up, made sure he did, and followed it up by personally paying for the medications. The story of our retino-vitreous specialist from our Vijayawada campus again highlighted the commitment to care when she completed laser treatment of a new born with Retinopathy of Prematurity against all odds in a recent incident. It is these members of our LVPEI family that bring a smile to all of us each morning.

- Gullapalli N Rao