



## June 2017 at LVPEI

On June 1, we have celebrated our Institute's THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY. That day in 1987, we started our services with six patients - three paying and three non-paying. It was an auspicious beginning, as this volume has now grown to service nearly 5000 patients across our network each day, over half of whom receive these services at no cost. In addition, we screen an average of 2000 to 3000 individuals in the rural areas through door to door surveys each day. Complementing this is the major role the Institute is playing in education, research, innovation, eye banking, capacity building and a significant role in advocacy and eye health planning and formulation of policy at every level. This has all become possible, thanks to the big LVPEI family that is committed and compassionate coupled with generous support from friends all over the world.

Philanthropic support has always been central to realising many of our aspirations. On the occasion of the 30th Anniversary, Mr. Dilip Shanghvi, corporate titan and philanthropist from Mumbai has become our "30 Year Benefactor" with a major financial commitment. Close on the heels of this, a young couple, Swathi and Rajeev Nannapaneni made the biggest ever contribution and in a single installment till date. This indeed was a trailblazer in Indian philanthropy for that age group. Our vision of developing an Institute of Excellence for child eye health, the "Child Sight Institute", will be realised with this support. Yet another gesture of generosity from our long term supporter, Prof. Ramakrishna Rao, with land on the outskirts of Hyderabad will help us to implement some innovative ideas for training of rural youth for eye care. All these acts of munificence will help us to build a very strong foundation for the next big leap. To each of these philanthropists, we are deeply indebted.

Our research team led by Director Emeritus Prof Balasubramanian was in Lisbon and Coimbra in Portugal for discussions on our various collaborations with the Champalimaud Foundation (CF) and the University of Coimbra. While at the Champalimaud Foundation's magnificent "Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown", they had the pleasure of meeting the Indian Prime Minister Modi along with the Prime Minister of Portugal. Mr. Modi was on a visit to Portugal. This was a bonus for our team on top of the very productive discussions they had with our collaborators leading to newer areas of partnership with the outstanding group at Champalimaud Foundation.

Our Institute's commitment to comprehensive eye care has been strong since inception and vision rehabilitation for people with irreversible blindness and low vision is one of the components of this care. This activity commenced since the inception but received a big boost with the inauguration of Dr. P.R.K. Prasad Centre for Vision Rehabilitation 25 years ago. More than 160,000 patients with this form of disability were given training and empowered to lead lives close to their normal sighted counterparts. We feel extremely gratified, whenever one of them gets into a senior position in one of the technology companies; comes out of college or school with flying colours; or is successful in their small business following our intervention in



rural areas. Later, with the addition of education programmes for rehabilitation professionals and the research segment, our work in this area has grown significantly. This was replicated in other tertiary centres and this component of work is getting integrated into each of our secondary centres. The ever increasing activity of this component of our Institute lead to the inauguration of another Institute of Excellence, “Institute for Vision Rehabilitation” by Dr. Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director of World Health Organization last December. This will act as a major resource centre for organisations within and outside India. We congratulate the team lead by Beula Christy for their stellar performance, making us proud. We are also indebted to many supporters and friends including Dr.P.R.K. Prasad, the family of Deshpandes (Meera & L.B. Deshpande; Smita & Sanjay Deshpande; Meghna & Vinay Deshpande and Rewati & Madan Maha) and other funding agencies.

Retinoblastoma is a form of childhood eye cancer that can be fatal if not detected early. Regrettably, this is the situation for many victims of this problem in the developing world. Allen Foster from International Centre for Eye Health, London with the support from Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, has organized a "Retinoblastoma Network" workshop with representatives from 7 countries including Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Indonesia, United Kingdom, and India to plan a strategy to address this problem across the developing countries. Detailed plan has been developed with timelines for implementation. Swathi Kaliki, Head of our Institute for Eye Cancer, coordinated this workshop from our side. Allen’s unique style of leadership produced excellent outcomes from this workshop that created a network of institutes across these countries. This network will focus on this problem and create a framework for early diagnosis and appropriate treatment of this otherwise fatal disease.

The team lead by Dr. Anthony Vipin Das, Head of our Digital LVPEI Project, developed the Holo Eye Anatomy module on the mixed reality platform of the Microsoft Hololens. This allows us to experience the eye anatomy in a whole new dimension of 3D, where the user can walk into the model and discover the complex structure of the eye. This has a huge potential for both medical and surgical training of ophthalmologists and allied eye care professionals.

Another area of education, which is an annual activity, was the visit of Dr. Audrey Rostov from Seattle this month. She worked with our team from Tej Kohli Cornea Institute in the area of new techniques for minimally invasive partial corneal replacement. Dr Rostov, who is Associate Global Director for SightLife, spent time with our faculty members, helping them polish cutting edge skills; and with our fellows, providing a wholesome learning experience in managing corneal swelling.

It was heartening to see record volumes at many of our secondary centres, with significant increase compared to the first six months of last year. Thanks to the efforts of the entire secondary centre teams lead by Varsha Rathi and Joji Prasad. To all the ophthalmologists in these centres and the administrators, I convey my congratulations for this excellent performance. That this growth happened almost equally in the paying and nonpaying segments of our patients is a very encouraging feature.



Our primary eye care vision centres continue to expand each month. A new dimension to this programme has opened up a great opportunity for scaling up these centres in the country. We have entered into an agreement for support to create a number of centres in the parliamentary constituency of one of the Members of the Indian Parliament and Central Minister. If this experiment succeeds, there is potential for replication in other constituencies of many other members of the Parliament. Indian Parliament has 543 constituencies. This concept of taking high quality primary eye care integrated with high quality secondary care, with these centres offering comprehensive eye care closer to the door step of people in rural areas, is a powerful solution to address the massive problem of blindness and visual impairment in rural areas.

A Hyderabad based radiologist had undergone two corneal transplants at our Institute during his teen years when his vision started deteriorating drastically affecting his studies and overall personality development as well. As the patient said “Dr. Prashant Garg has been a major influence in my life. He would always motivate me to study and scale greater heights”. He recently cleared the prestigious IAS (Indian Administrative Service) exams. Extremely pleased with the treatment provided at the Institute, Sandeep Kumar Nallamothe’s father says, “I am so proud of my son’s achievements. We have been fortunate to receive the best of care at LVPEI.” Over 25,000 victims of treatable corneal diseases had corneal transplant surgery at our Institute till date.

- Gullapalli N Rao