



September 2017 at LVPEI

The month of September was marked by intense activity particularly on the Education front. As part of the commitment to develop “Comprehensive Eye Care“, we have been involved in the education of multiple cadres of eye care professionals since inception. This is to foster the culture of team approach for better outputs and outcomes. Through all this, we have made our small contribution for human resource development for India and many other developing countries, with trainees also coming from high income countries. Optometry is one such area in which we have been involved in all functional aspects through which LVPEI works. The inauguration of “Brien Holden Institute of Optometry and Vision Sciences” brings all these under one umbrella. Named after a devoted friend and one of the biggest supporters of our Institute since the days of its concept, this Institute aspires to be a leader in the field and to carry Brien Holden’s legacy forwards. Brien was a visionary leader, entrepreneur and scientist who worked not only for the advancement of science and technology in all possible ways but contributed immensely for the public good across the world. Our group is privileged to house this as part of our Institute. Prof. Desmond Fonn, Director Emeritus of the Contact Lens Research Centre at the University of Waterloo and a close friend of Brien did the honours. Daniel Holden, younger son of Brien, represented the family. We look forward with optimism to the role this Institute will play in the world of eye care.

The World Congress of Optometry (WCO) was held in Hyderabad and our group participated actively with 38 presentations in addition to invited lectures and chairing sessions. Alongside this, the International Association of Contact Lens Educators (IACLE) held its meeting at our Institute. In both the meetings, discussions were held with global leaders in these fields for collaboration on a variety of fronts. During this meeting, a Chair of Contact Lenses was created which is named after Prof. Deborah Sweeney, a world renowned figure in this field; a long term associate of Brien Holden; and a very active supporter of our Institute. Our Institute has played an important role in contact lens education in India through IACLE and ICLEP (Indian Contact Lens Education Programme). We have been the Asia-Pacific home for IACLE, and ICLEP is our in house programme.

Other major education activities included the Annual Eye PEP (Postgraduate Education Programme) to expose Ophthalmology residents to the current knowledge, techniques and technologies through diverse instruction methods. 182 students attended from all across India. This annual event is a major attraction for residents whose appetite for such instruction is very high. This augurs well for the quality of eye care in the future. The meeting of The Ophthalmic Forum of the Indian Society of Anesthesiologists was yet another big meeting hosted by us.

LVPEI is heavily committed to Eye Research since inception and it has now become a major component. One feature of our research is emphasis on “Translation”. To this end, a number of avenues were created for cross fertilization among diverse groups of researchers all the way from three times a week discussions to the way physical spaces are distributed. In the recent past, we have been working towards frequent face to face interactions among the faculty across the network to share, discuss and identify future paths for our research. This “Cross Talk” that happened this month was very productive.



LVPEI now has ten functional dimensions and the “Product Development” component has taken a leap into manufacturing this month through the creation of a facility to produce “Scleral Contact Lenses” with technology transfer from Boston Foundation for Sight (BFS). This state of the art technology opens up doors to make these lenses available to everyone who could benefit from these which include complex and recalcitrant corneal diseases. In many cases, these may obviate the need for corneal transplantation. The first lenses started rolling out and will be made available across India initially, followed by international markets. Thanks to Mr. Gene Guselli, President and CEO of BFS for facilitating this transfer and inaugurating this facility. We are excited to see this valuable component added to our activities, which will benefit thousands of victims of corneal disease.

The honours list included many in our team and our Rehabilitation team was honored with the “Project of the year” for its social impact at the annual meeting of the Project Management Institute. To all these ambassadors of our work, congratulations!

Our foray into more neglected geographic areas continued with the inauguration of a primary care “Vision Centre” in Uravakonda, Anantpur District of Andhra Pradesh, with the score reaching 156. TOMS and Seva Foundation funded the equipment and training and the local Lions Club provided space rent free. We are grateful to all these organizations for this gesture.

Our Ramayamma International Eye Bank did it again, bettering its own previous monthly record by harvesting 765 corneas! We are indebted to all the families whose magnificent gesture, in their time of loss, would light the lives of hundreds of those living. Our thanks are also due to all the hospitals whose management continues to support this endeavor.

The story of twenty four year old Uma Batta from a tribal area is indeed a moving one. A school dropout because of her extreme poverty and poor health, she began to help her mother who was an agricultural labourer. She had to discontinue even this due to failing vision. The country doctors gave her no hope of recovery. When she visited one of our vision centres closer to her, she was diagnosed to have cataract and was referred to the next level to our secondary centre. Successful cataract surgery led to sight restoration and a return to productive life again. Availability, accessibility and affordability of care (at no cost in her case) transformed her life. The smile on her face was enough of a reward for us.

- Gullapalli N Rao