



November 2017 at LVPEI

One of the major achievements of our Tej Kohli Cornea Institute since its launch two years ago was to “Eliminate Distance” and take high quality care of corneal problems closer to the doorsteps of the people who need it the most - the rural population. The difference it makes is so well illustrated by the way advanced form of partial thickness (lamellar) corneal transplantation performed by one of our colleagues, Jagadesh Reddy, transformed the life of a twenty two year old young man. This person had significant vision problems since his teens and had completed his undergraduate degree with great limitations. His dream of taking the Indian civil services examinations appeared impossible. He was earlier diagnosed with a corneal disease and underwent treatment in one eye elsewhere some years ago but ended with a poor outcome. When he came to our secondary Centre in the coastal Andhra Pradesh village of Venkatachalam (Nellore District), Jagadesh examined him and found him to have a condition amenable to this surgical intervention. The outcome was excellent and will now possibly allow this young man to realize his full potential. All this was possible because of a unique “Cornea Care System” that was developed by our group. This includes excellent infrastructure and trained staff at the rural secondary care centre including a comprehensive ophthalmologist trained in the care of corneal diseases and transplants, a highly qualified Cornea specialist traveling from the tertiary centre to perform surgery, a world class Eye Bank to provide corneal tissue and most importantly, follow up care closer to the patient’s home by a well-trained ophthalmologist with monitoring by the Cornea team from the tertiary Centre incorporating weekly grand rounds using technology (ECHO clinics). Indeed, we are privileged to have all these disparate entities coordinated together as a comprehensive care system in our institute. This system is replicated in many of our secondary care rural Centres and is now also employed at our Centre in the distant Liberia.

Investment in high quality education since our inception forms the basis of all such activities. The high level education programmes on corneal infections, entitled “Bug Busters” organised by Bhupesh Bagga with outstanding faculty, the visit by one of the foremost corneal transplant surgeons in the world, Francis Price from Indianapolis orchestrated by Sunita Chaurasia, and a workshop on “Pediatric Cornea” led by Muralidhar Ramappa, during this month are all indicators of such commitment. Our trainees are fortunate to have scores of global leaders visiting us and gifting us their talent and time.

Another area we are very focused upon has been “Children’s Eye Health”. What started as a Pediatric Ophthalmology service over twenty five years ago evolved into one of the first dedicated “Children’s Eye Care Centre” (Jasti V Ramanamma Children’s Eye Care Centre) thanks to the munificence of Dr. Jasti Rattayya of Cupertino, California and a grant from Sightsavers International of UK. This Centre celebrated its TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY on the 30th. Many global leaders were in attendance. Each of our three tertiary centres that sprouted later has one such centre (the Miriam Hyman, Nimmagadda Prasad and David Brown Children’s Eye Care Centres at Bhubaneswar, Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada campuses respectively). This network has now become one of our “Institutes of Excellence“. The “Child Sight Institute” will be an umbrella for all our work in this speciality and follows the pattern of the Cornea Institute. Rajiv and Swathi Nannapaneni of Hyderabad have made a significant contribution to realise this goal. This support opens up many new opportunities and allows for exploration of newer frontiers.



One such frontier is the study of the development of vision and visual recovery. The extent and pattern of visual recovery in a child born with cataract following a successful surgery is an ongoing research question. This as well as the ability of the brain to compensate for loss of a certain component of the brain function, referred to as the “plasticity” of the brain, was the subject of a joint symposium of the Indian National Science Academy, and its German counterpart Leopoldina, hosted by LVPEI at its Hyderabad Campus. “The Challenge to Learn: New Approaches to Study the Problem of Stability vs Plasticity in the Brain” was a two-day seminar that consisted of lectures by 8 experts each from Europe and India, plus 17 poster presentations from junior scientists from both Europe and India. We thank Professor Brigitte Roeder of the University of Hamburg, Germany and Professor Neeraj Jain of the National Centre for Brain Research, Manesar for facilitating the exciting seminar. Brigitte and our team together set up a laboratory at our Institute to pursue this.

Other education activities this month included the week-long 53rd version of the “Indian Contact Lens Educators Programme“, a course on “standard protocols for operating rooms“ and a “Teachers’ Training Programme” for school teachers to keep an eye on children with vision problems. Chirag Patel from Boston helped us with a course on “Boston Scleral Contact Lenses”.

The “Institute for Vision Rehabilitation” organised its annual Integrated Fun Camp. 460 participants made the event very worthwhile.

Advocacy has always been one of our active arms. We were pleased to host a team of members of the state legislature from the state of Odisha at our Hyderabad campus. They were particularly interested in our very successful programme on “Retinopathy of Prematurity”, which is fast emerging as a major cause of childhood blindness. The programme developed by Subhadra Jalali, including a citywide surveillance system for premature babies, has become a very successful model in controlling the devastation caused by this disease. This is now being replicated nationwide.

The tally of our Primary Care Vision Centres reached 160 this month with the inaugural of the Machavaram and Therubali Vision Centres in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha respectively

The ranking by the popular weekly, “The Week” placed our Institute as No.1 Eye Hospital in India. Coming a few months after such ranking by the daily, “Times of India” is a cause for celebration. Irrespective of the rank, the fact that we have built a mark of quality is something we cherish. I congratulate each member of LVPEI family who contributed to this through their incredible commitment treating each patient with utmost respect irrespective their position or background. The following communication from a patient of ours from Malawi is yet another endorsement of our work:

“Despite undergoing a series of surgeries and the best of efforts by doctors in my hometown, I did not regain vision. Simple things such as climbing stairs or walking around independently became a challenge. Highly recommended by my doctor, I came to LVPEI along with my husband. Right from the security personnel to the patient care staff and the doctors, everybody has been extremely courteous and never made us feel that we are in a foreign land. All my fears and anxiety were put to rest by Dr Muralidhar Ramappa’s assuring statement – ‘You don’t worry ma’am. We will take care of you.’ And indeed, he did! Post the surgery I have regained functional vision in my right eye. It feels so good to see things clearly again.”

- Gullapalli N Rao