



February 2018 at LVPEI

One aspect of our work that has earned international recognition for the Institute is our faculty's contribution to research and teaching over the years. Our group again made an impressive presence in two major ophthalmology events this month - the Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology (APAO) meeting in Hong Kong and the All India Ophthalmological Society (AIOS) meeting in Coimbatore. Over 50 presentations were made at the APAO and about 90 presentations at the AIOS. Several in our team delivered invited lectures, chaired and moderated sessions, contributed to the development of the scientific programme, with some of them receiving honours and awards during these meetings. Teaching and Research is an integral part of the work of each member of our clinical faculty. This tradition effectively nurtured the culture of translational research in our Institute.

Childhood blindness is a major public health problem globally and becomes significant because of the number of blind years with consequent socio-economic impact. Child Eye Health has always been a major area of focus for us for the past twenty five years. The Jasti V Ramanamma Children's Eye Care Centre, inaugurated over twenty years ago as a dedicated, specially designed children's centre in our Hyderabad campus, has now become part of a network-wide cluster of such centres in all our Tertiary Centres. This, together with the primary care activity in rural areas including school and community screening in all the three states where we provide direct services, makes it into a major Children's Eye Health Initiative anywhere. In the recent past, all this activity has been integrated into our new "Child Sight Institute", an Institute of Excellence and a Global Resource Centre for Child Eye Health. A large screening programme, funded by USAID that screened over 300,000 children in Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh was concluded this month. Provision of required services for those identified with problems is continuing. A similar large programme is currently in progress in the Adilabad and Nirmal Districts of Telangana state (supported by Lavelle Fund for the Blind of New York). Another similar programme that we have completed recently was in the Rayagada District of Odisha. Surgical care for children however remains in the realm of tertiary care and continues to be a major challenge for accessibility to people in rural areas. This is because of the complexity of care involving multiple specialists and the anaesthesia coverage that is critical. We are investigating into ways of overcoming this challenge. While reaching out to all these children and providing services is the greatest priority, we are also making use of the information collected for future planning of services and research into various aspects of children's eye health. With our Vice Chair TP Das 's appointment as Chair of Universal Eye Health Programme of Odisha state and the Odisha Government's recognition of our Bhubaneswar campus as the State Resource Centre, there is potential for a state-wide replication of this initiative with large impact.

Three of our Secondary Centres and few of our Vision Centres celebrated their anniversaries this month. Once again, we salute all our team members in these centres for their extraordinary dedication and diligence, living in difficult locations and touching lives of those who deserve most help. The increasing interest of local political leaders and government officials in this work and also opting to receive care in these centres is a good development. This degree of community ownership augurs well for the health care of the community. The one major advancement in all these secondary centres was the addition of services traditionally in the realm of tertiary care such as corneal transplantation, retinal and ophthalmic plastic surgery and more complex



glaucoma care. This was possible because of the unique model of integrated delivery of care that we have. This includes a coordinated team approach of a subspecialty specialist visiting these centres regularly and performing procedures, and the locally based full time comprehensive ophthalmologist providing needed follow-up care, further augmented by tele-consultation wherever required. In addition, there is an ongoing education for the ophthalmologists in these centres using technological tools.

One more Primary Care Vision Centre was added in Durgi village of Guntur District in Andhra Pradesh taking our total number to 169. This centre is linked to our Secondary Centre in Dhoolipalla (Edward and Soona Brown Centre) village of the same district.

Our tertiary centre in Vijayawada (Kode Venkatadri Chowdary campus) has celebrated its sixth anniversary. Several activities progressed significantly that had a great impact in this part of Andhra Pradesh. These include capacity building of ophthalmology department in Guntur Medical College, surveillance for the Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) programmes in many children's hospitals and our oncology unit and eye bank. The progress of the new Cerebral Visual Impairment Centre was significant and this was possible because of the availability of well qualified pediatric ophthalmology and rehabilitation teams. The Tej Kohli Eye Bank here is the first ever international standard eye bank in this part of the country and for the first time hundreds of corneal donations happened in this part of Andhra Pradesh. The experience with the very successful Ramayamma International Eye Bank in our Hyderabad campus laid a strong foundation for this activity. Congratulations to all the members of the team!

Several in our team received laurels, both national and international, this month. While this has become a regular feature for our faculty, the one for our HR Head, Ajay Nath, deserves special mention. He received the "100 Top HR minds in India Award".

The story of Santoshi, Vision Technician at our Kandukuru Secondary Centre in Andhra Pradesh is very touching. Having lost her parents and the only sibling as a child, she was brought up by her maternal grandmother in the rural part of Northern Andhra Pradesh. After high school, she pursued our vision technician course and ended up on the staff at the Kandukuru Centre. Her decision to marry a fellow technician Anjaneyulu met with resistance from his parents. This is when the centre Administrator Venkat Rao assumed the role of a big brother and together with some elders in the village, convinced the parents that ended in a happy wedding. The entire staff of the centre contributed financially to ensure that the couple had a wonderful traditional ceremony. What better way than to practice our value of "togetherness". We are grateful to Venkat Rao and the entire team at the centre who made us proud with this incredible gesture of love.

- Gullapalli N Rao