



May 2018 at LVPEI

Retinoblastoma is a form of eye cancer in children and India has the largest magnitude of the problem globally. When dealing with this problem, saving life, saving the eye and saving sight become the goals of treatment in that order. In many developing countries, the mortality rate is unacceptably high due to late presentation coupled with lack of facilities to treat the problem. The situation has become significantly better in some urban areas of India where modern cancer centres have come up. Our “OEU Institute for Eye Cancer” is one of the leaders in this effort. With support from Operation Eyesight Universal (OEU), Canada, and other organizations and philanthropists, this component of our Institute is able to offer appropriate and prompt care of the highest standards, thus improving the outcomes significantly. We are happy that we are able to extend this care even to those who are economically disadvantaged at no cost to them. We still have to do much more to enhance public awareness about this problem. As one of the strategies to raise awareness about this lethal problem in children, our oncology group led by Swathi Kaliki organized a run, the “Whitathon”. We are grateful to the famous cricket stars, VVS Lakshman and Tom Moody, and the “SunRisers Hyderabad” team of the Indian premier league for their participation to support the cause. While advocacy has always been one of our active functional areas at local, national and global levels, this was the first ever public awareness event for retinoblastoma, and had over 2500+ participants. This was also the first ever public fundraising event. These contributions will help to provide better care for the economically disadvantaged. Kudos to Swathi for her relentless effort to achieve this success!

These initiatives, together with our Cancer Institute’s capacity building and fellowship programmes for organizations and ophthalmologists from other low resource countries, will have a salutary effect in containing the mortality and morbidity from this form of cancer. These programmes are supported through grants from the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust and the International Council of Ophthalmology.

A few months ago, we inaugurated a manufacturing facility for a special form of contact lens developed by the Boston Foundation for Sight. This was their first-ever contract outside their facilities in Boston. These lenses are very effective, both for correction of complex refractive errors as well as in treating certain forms of corneal diseases. We have begun supplying these lenses to other institutions and their feedback is very heartening. We have increased the volume of production significantly this month. Our aspiration is to make these available to all who need them while still keeping the unit self-sustaining.

In the area of education, we had a busy month with many programmes including an “exit competency programme” in pediatric ophthalmology for fellows and residents, and continuing professional development programmes (CPD) for different cadres in our group. We are offering CPD programmes to an ever increasing number of professionals to help them stay current in their areas of work.

The number of primary care vision centres reached 172 this month, adding yet another rural community to our network.



Congratulations are due to Niranjan Pehere, Head of the David Brown Children's Eye Care Centre in our Vijayawada campus, for publishing a paper on cerebral visual impairment (CVI), the first ever from this part of the world. Niranjan made this as his main area of focus and has been making steady progress.

We completed 31 years of service on May 31, 2018. We had started with five patients in our Hyderabad campus on June 1, 1987. Just on the last day of our 31st year, we served 5,208 out-patients and performed 453 surgical procedures in addition to screening programmes in rural communities across our network of 197 centres in four states. Indeed, many of our campuses had a record volume of patients. We are grateful to all the individuals who trust us and give us the opportunity to serve them. Overall, the thirty-first year ended on an impressive note.

Let me end this communication with this heart-warming story of one of our colleagues in our Opticals division; Rama Rao. When he was at an ATM machine at the end of the day, he was approached by a man asking for money for a bus ticket to go home. He came to the Institute a few days earlier, got operated at no cost and was discharged, but had no way of going back home since his family was nowhere to be seen. Rama Rao escorted him to the bus station, paid for his bus ticket, gave him some more money and sent him home. We are proud of this act of utmost caring, a trait we constantly strive to nurture at our Institute. My special compliments to Rama Rao for this incredible gesture of humanity.

- Gullapalli N. Rao