



## **January 2019 at LVPEI**

A major challenge for eye care programmes globally is the enormous shortage of well-trained Human Resources. In most of the countries, there is too much reliance on ophthalmologists alone. Consequently, there is a huge backlog of services to address the burden of blindness and visual impairment. At our Institute, we have adopted an “Eye Care Team Approach” with defined roles for each cadre making care efficient and cost effective. To build this capacity, we have designed and implemented several education programmes covering almost all cadres needed for Eye Care. The products of these programmes not only meet our internal demand but also are recruited by many other organisations in the developing world. Career advancement opportunities are an integral part of our employment. Optometrists working with Ophthalmologists form the core element of our outpatient and certain speciality services. Our Optometry programme is quite robust and this group is a major enabler for dealing with large volumes. We are in dialogue with the City University of London for advanced education for this group as well as for collaborative opportunities. The London team visited us this month and held discussions with our team led by Shrikant Bharadwaj to move this forward. This initiative will strengthen our activities and also create a cadre of trainers and researchers for us. Over the years we had many fruitful collaborations with leading national and international organisations in education, research and public health that have been of great benefit both to the Institute and individuals.

Adoption of modern technological tools has been a big enabler of our education programmes. A key element is the interconnectivity among the various campuses in our network, which helps to disseminate the benefits of all programmes more widely and consistently. Equally important is our ability to share this knowledge with the wider world. Regular upgrading of this technology is critical. This process was completed in two of our campuses, and this would enhance the quality of communication significantly.

Grants and philanthropic support realised this month will help in the expansion of the operating room complex and the residential facilities for trainees at our Mithu Tulsi Chanrai Campus in Bhubaneswar. With the support received earlier, we commenced the work on creating additional education facilities at our Kode Venkatadri Chowdary Campus in Vijayawada. These will help us to train more people and also open the door for new initiatives. We are indebted to Wen Giving Foundation, Mission for Vision, National Thermal Power Corporation and Suven Pharma for making these possible.

Children’s eye care has been a big area of focus for us. Anil Mandal, one of our glaucoma specialists, has been deeply engaged in the problem of childhood glaucoma dealing with one of the largest volumes in the world. His work received recognition this month, from the “Pediatric Glaucoma Society of UK” when he was invited to deliver the prestigious “Noel Rice Lecture” at their annual meeting. This is indeed a richly deserved honour, given his intense commitment to transform the lives of the children with this problem.

D. Balasubramanian (Balu), Director of Research Emeritus, has been elected as Vice President of the World Academy of Sciences, Trieste, Italy. This is a fitting tribute to Balu’s extensive interests and contributions to a wide range of scientific issues; including his deep commitment to promote science in the developing world.



Our Centre for Technology Innovation hosted a workshop on “Humanistic Co-design for the Visually Impaired” in collaboration with Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Dr. Kyle Keane from MIT was the main mentor. Given our significant involvement in Vision Rehabilitation work, this was of great value and opens up new possibilities for our clients with irreversible forms of vision impairment. Our compliments to Raghav Gullapalli and his team for organising this event.

The expansion of our primary eye care services in remote rural areas continued with the inauguration of our 178<sup>th</sup> Vision Centre in the tribal area of Muniguda, in Rayagada district of Odisha state. We are grateful to the Wen Giving Foundation and Mission for Vision for their support. We are also indebted to New Hope Rural Leprosy Trust who provided the space for this centre.

Let me end this with the story of Radhika Sodhani, a 4.5 month old baby, who was diagnosed with unilateral congenital cataract in Costa Rica during a routine check-up. This was heart-breaking news for her parents. They were referred to our Institute for further treatment. Muralidhar Ramappa, our paediatric cornea specialist, provided the necessary care with restoration of sight.

The experience of her parents is best expressed in their own words:

“During the whole process of multiple check-ups, surgery and the follow ups, we were highly overwhelmed by the professionalism of the staff. Starting from the appointment to the final examination under anaesthesia for removal of stitches, everything was very well structured. All our concerns and our questions as extremely anxious first time parents were duly answered and explained well by the doctor and the staff and at all times we were kept well informed on email/sms/phone calls and verbally of what to expect and what precautions or guidelines to follow for each procedure. Last but not the least, the entire process at LVPEI was very economical. We wholeheartedly thank Dr. Muralidhar and the entire LVPEI team for the overall experience and as Dr. Muralidhar had mentioned in one of the conversations “This is not just a surgery but a lifetime relationship between the baby, the parents and the doctor!”

An example of far-reaching impact of our services, made possible by the comprehensive nature of care provided at our Institute.

- Gullapalli N Rao