



March 2019 at LVPEI

March 31st marks the end of our activity year. While March itself has much to talk of, none more than the one distinction that was achieved a couple of days later as this created history. We have completed 100 corneal transplants in our rural secondary centres.

Indeed, history is created with this feat! This is a clear demonstration that anything is possible anywhere with perseverance, strong belief, and relentless pursuit of goals by a dedicated team. These are transformative, touching the lives of individuals, families and communities. Even today in many rural parts of India and many other parts of the world, access to health care of any sort remains a mirage. Against this background, our team was able to offer not only high quality basic services upto the secondary level, but also complex procedures such as corneal transplantation. Not too long ago, many professed that corneal transplantation should not even be attempted in developing countries, and that eye banking is an impossibility. It has been a long and arduous journey to build a robust “Cornea care system” with all the essential ingredients for success. With a combination of talent and technology, we were able to transfer the benefits of this system to the rural people, in whom the prevalence of corneal blindness is higher. Well trained comprehensive ophthalmologists staffing these secondary centres; cornea specialists frequenting these centres to perform surgery; well-equipped infrastructure; availability of good quality donor corneas; follow up care by a trained ophthalmologist; different modalities of telemedicine for care; and education constituted the formula.

Our Ramayamma International Eye Bank has broken the barrier of 10000! Over ten thousand corneas were harvested this past year by our eye bank, of which over 6000 were transplanted; and 3000 of these were done in our network. The Hyderabad component of our Tej Kohli Cornea Institute continues to lead the world in the volume of corneal transplants. Ramayamma Eye Bank harvested more than 75,000 corners since its inception and over 40,000 of these were used for corneal transplants; and this is yet another milestone. In fact all these are new records and created history in India for eye banking and organ donation, and a record for Asia in eye banking and corneal transplantation. The entire eye bank team and the Tej Kohli Cornea Institute deserve a special applause for this superlative effort in creating multiple new records.

Another significant development in our eye banking activities was progress with the plans to enhance national capacity. We have started the construction of an eye bank in Rishikesh, in the state of Uttarakhand; and entered into an MOU for setting up an eye bank in Varanasi (Banaras), in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Both these are supported by the Hans Foundation.

The financial year ended on a positive note, with the Institute receiving the biggest ever education grant from the Standard chartered Bank. This will augment our capacity, in the training of midlevel ophthalmic personnel (technicians, nurses etc.), in a big way and will double our capacity by the end of 2020 across our network. We are very thankful to Standard Chartered for considering us worthy of this grant.



Another significant contribution came from Mr. Dilip Shanghvi, Chair of Sun Pharma. This multi-year gift will help us to scale up multiple programmes. We are also grateful to Suven Pharma and its Founder Chair for the grant towards advancement of our clinical research centre. This will help us to elevate the standards of this Centre.

The year ending on March 31st was one of intense activity on multiple fronts with new records from many areas. Patient volumes were up; number of training programmes and trainees multiplied; and research continued to flourish. For the first time, we have published over 300 papers in peer reviewed journals, a strong sign that our policy to promote this activity is more than validated. Many in our group have been honored with awards, prizes or appointments to positions of influence in different national and international organizations. In the rural eye health front, we have touched many more lives and communities; we took additional services closer to people; enhanced the quality of services; and created opportunities for many rural youth to serve their and other communities. More details will be shared when the annual report is released in a couple of months.

Sandeep from our Innovation Centre was listed among the finalists for the “2018 Holman Prize” by the Lighthouse for the Blind based in San Francisco. This award is given to “support the emerging adventurousness and can-do spirit” of persons with visual impairment worldwide. He was also invited to present his work at the convention of the American Council of the Blind. Javed Ali’s brilliant journey continues with his appointment as Visiting Professor at the Friedrich Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany. This followed his just concluded Experienced Alexander Von Humboldt Research fellowship.

Our gardens continue to match our talented group in getting laurels year after year. We have just received six prizes at the State Garden Festival yet again. We are very proud of our gardens on all our campuses that provide a “feast to the Eye”. Congratulations to the team who toil tirelessly in the hot sun tending to our gardens with such love and passion.

The Vice President of India, Honourable Sri M. Venkaiah Naidu visited us during this month. Following this, this is what he tweeted about our Centre for Technology Innovation – “I am happy that engineers, medical professionals, designers and researchers have been working to build affordable gen next eye care technologies to help billions of people in India and abroad”.

- Gullapalli N Rao