



## **October 2019 at LVPEI**

We celebrated the THIRTY THIRD FOUNDATION DAY of our Institute on the 17th of this month. The ground breaking ceremony happened on the morning of October 17, 1986 and the foundation stone was laid by the then Chief Minister of united Andhra Pradesh, Mr. N T Rama Rao in the presence of Mr. L V Prasad and other well-wishers.

From humble beginnings, our journey over these thirty three years has given us the privilege of touching millions of lives directly and many times more indirectly in a variety of ways. All this was possible due to the dedication and diligence of our team and the trust reposed in us by thousands of supporters from around the world. We owe all of them a debt of gratitude.

One of our most successful programmes is Eye Banking. This month we created a new record by providing 525 transplantable corneas from the Ramayamma International Eye Bank (RIEB), definitely the highest for any eye bank in Asia. The number was 639 from all eye banks in our network in addition to RIEB. Once again, from a prediction of “no chance” to this stage has been an incredible feat. Congratulations to everyone involved in this mammoth endeavor; and we thank all the supporters who believed in us. In our Institute system alone, our team at Tej Kohli Cornea Institute has performed a record number of over 30000 transplants. With new initiatives currently in progress, the future looks even more promising.

As always, a large contingent from our Institute have attended and contributed to various scientific sessions of the annual meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology in San Francisco. Over 50 presentations were made by our group. Several moderated or chaired some of the sessions. On the sidelines of this meeting, we had multiple discussions with our current collaborators and forged new ones that offer exciting possibilities.

Our primary care Vision Centre programme received a significant fillip with a big grant from Standard Chartered Bank. With this support we have launched the programme of “Vision Centres of the Future”. The programme involves addition of modern technological tools for better diagnosis along with better telemedicine system in the vision centres. This will facilitate more care at this level reducing the distance to travel for those in remote areas even further. This is in line with our philosophy of providing as much care as possible “closer to the door step” of the people who need it most. The first centre was launched in Keshampet village in Ranga Reddy district of Telangana state. With this, a new era has begun. We gratefully acknowledge the support of Standard Chartered who made this possible.

Yet another boost to our activity happened when Standard Chartered provided another grant to significantly scale up our Education capacity. This indeed will allow us to expand both the campus-based education across our network as well as distance education. A major focus will be on creating careers to disadvantaged youth, particularly women, by offering them education opportunities in various cadres of eye care; again an area that aligns so well with our values and vision.



While several in our team received honours, a few stand out. Swathi Kaliki, Head of our OEU Institute for Eye Cancer received the prestigious “Shakuntala Amir Chand Prize” from the Indian Council of Medical Research. Javed Ali, Head of our Seksaria Institute of Dacryology, was appointed as Hong Leong Professor of Ophthalmology at the National University of Singapore. Our Executive Vice-Chair, Ramam Atmakuri was elected to the Board of Directors of the Education Foundation of the prestigious US-based “Project Management Institute”. Vivek Singh, one of our scientists in stem cell biology has received appreciation from the editor of the highly ranked journal “Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science” for an “exceptionally good review”.

We gratefully acknowledge the support received from Odisha State Mining Corporation for building additional facilities at our Bhubaneswar Campus (Mithu Tulsi Chanrai Campus); and the support from AT&T for our work in our rural secondary centres.

One of the outcomes of all the progress made is touching lives and making a difference. This is exemplified in the story of K. Swathi. Twenty three year old Swathi comes from an economically disadvantaged family in a rural village of Telangana. She was selected two years ago for the Vision Technician Training programme and has been posted at our first new generation vision centre in Keshampet launched this month. Thankful for the life altering opportunity Swathi had this to say “my placement at Keshampet made me feel proud that I am the first VT of the futuristic Vision Centre. I wanted to do something good for my family and society, and make my family proud being a girl child. Today I feel proud that I am independent and can serve 50,000 people from this facility”.

Swathi, who will be mainly responsible for the success of this first futuristic vision centre, will be an inspiration for hundreds of others who will go through such training. The creation of such vision centres and the training opportunities for many young women like Swathi are part of the programmes that were launched with support from Standard Chartered this month.

- Gullapalli N. Rao