



July 2020 at LVPEI

Taking as much care as possible “closer to the doorstep” of the people who need it most has been one of our abiding principles. To achieve this end, we have innovated and implemented the pyramidal model of high quality comprehensive care that is available to all. This is a multi-tier, integrated, and patient-centred model across all levels of care from primary to advanced tertiary. More recently, we started to migrate as many elements of traditional tertiary care as possible into our secondary rural centres. These include corneal transplantation, care of complex glaucoma and retinal problems, children’s eye care and ophthalmic plastic surgery. A combination of appropriate talent and technology made this possible.

This approach was exemplified when an “Eyelid Reconstruction” procedure was performed in one of our rural secondary centres this month. A young man with total avulsion of the lid and a failed earlier intervention approached the centre. He was unable to travel to the tertiary centre for treatment. The procedure was performed at the Edward and Soona Brown Eye Centre in Dhulipalla of Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh. One of our young ophthalmic plastic surgeons visiting that centre on rotation took up the challenge and performed this procedure with a good outcome. The availability of a well-trained team ensured that the process went smoothly. The patient and his family were elated. In this world, currently dominated by Covid, there is an increasing requirement for more access to such advanced care. The benefits of this approach are already visible in the patient volumes and positive outcomes at our rural centres, more than the tertiary centres in cities.

Niranjan Pehere, former Head of Children’s Eye Care Centre in our Vijayawada (Kode Venkatadri Chowdary) campus, is now heading our Liberia Centre. He is now going beyond pediatric ophthalmology and venturing into procedures of this nature, guided by our faculty in Hyderabad, with good outcomes. Lack of specialists in these countries make this kind of approach necessary.

This was yet another decent month for our eye banking network with 117 corneas provided for transplantation, when there is a significant decline in eye banking everywhere. The credit goes to the diligence of our eye banking team.

While there is a lull in the activities of our research laboratories and clinical research, our faculty continued to utilize their time well with yet another productive month of publications. A total of 57 papers were published in peer reviewed journals this month with the average impact factor higher than the earlier months. A highlight was the recent publication of a landmark study on a rare form of corneal infection (pythium insidiosum). This was an outcome of rigorous research work that involved decoding the source of this condition, studying the clinical features, and developing the therapeutic approach for resolution. My compliments to everyone who have contributed to this. Another encouraging news was the release of grants from the governmental funding agencies, signalling resumption of support.

The educational activities covering all cadres continued unabated through various technology platforms. Hundreds have benefitted from these programmes. The annual ‘Eye-

PEP' programme for residents was again a big attraction. Residents from all parts of India and a few other countries participated. We are grateful to the many faculty from different countries who contributed to the richness of this programme. Kudos to Ramesh Kekunnaya and the academy team for a wonderfully organized programme.

The clinical services continued in all our campuses with the numbers around 50-60 percent of pre-covid levels. Compliance to the safety protocols by all staff played a big role in giving confidence to our patients and their families. Tele-consultations continued to benefit more and more patients obviating the need for them to visit our campuses.

Aishwarya and Beula from the Rehabilitation Institute, Vivek Dave from the Retina Institute and Niranjana Pehera from our Liberia Centre were the recipients of honours this month. Congratulations to each of them!

Financial sustainability is the key to effective running of organizations. The cumulative effect of the efforts of our team in every area coupled with the generosity of our supporters, which remained intact, made our journey through this trying time relatively smoother. We are grateful to all our supporters for their trust in us.

The well-being of our team members is always important for our Institute; and the achievements of the family members provides us joy. We were delighted when young Laya, daughter of Venkataswamy, operating room technician in our Thoodukurthy rural centre, was selected as one of the only five from public schools (government schools) to do a Master's programme in Aeronautical and Mechanical Engineering. Laya is also a chess champion and represented the state and the country. We congratulate Laya and her proud parents, and wish her all the best!

- Gullapalli N Rao