



September 2020 at LVPEI

Our “Vision Centre” model aims to provide high quality primary eye care to the disadvantaged communities in remote rural, tribal and urban slum locations. For nearly a quarter of the century, we focussed on expanding primary eye care through this model into four states of India; and have now become the biggest such network anywhere in that process. The model, conceptualized, developed, and refined over the years, has found wide acceptance with many organizations and some governments replicating it in parts of the developing world. Most of the major funding for our network of 196 centres was provided by Lavelle Fund for the Blind of New York and LDS Charities of Salt Lake City, Utah. This past year, this programme received a big boost with major funding from the Standard Chartered Bank through its “Seeing is Believing” programme. Through this 58 “Vision Centres of the Future”, incorporating some of the technological advances in diagnosis, documentation and tele- ophthalmology, will be inaugurated in the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Karnataka. Already eight such centres were inaugurated with four of them this month in the state of Telangana. We are also delighted to have our new partners, WenGiving Foundation of Australia and Mission for Vision of Mumbai joining this effort. This group is funding an additional twenty centres in the state of Odisha linked to our secondary centres there. Four centres were added this month in the state of Odisha. With this, our vision centres network has a total of 196 centres.

This expansion and enhancement seems timely, with the increasing demand for services at these centres in the past three months, compared to pre-Covid times. This is perhaps an indicator of the significance of these centres in the delivery of eye care in the future.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of all the above partners as well as numerous local partners where these centres are located. We are also privileged to have large community support. I compliment Niranjana Kumar, Executive Head of the Vision Centre programme and his team for their untiring efforts in making this demanding and important work impactful in very difficult geographic locations.

During the past three months our primary eye care services in rural areas were extended further with the addition of “Home Care for the Elderly” programme from our vision centres. 235 individuals in 28 villages were provided service through this approach. The response was very positive and the patients and their families were deeply appreciative of this care.

One of the important allies in our research activity is Department of Biotechnology (DBT) - Wellcome Trust India Alliance. Through the fellowship grant of our public health scientist, Srinivas Marmamula, we have carried out a study in Homes for the Elderly in Hyderabad. This study highlighted the large burden of vision loss in the elderly in residential care. Several important observations were published in peer reviewed journals and will become the basis for advocacy in formulating policies as well as an important guide in our relatively nascent focus on “Eye Care for the Elderly”.

We are recovering well from the effects of the pandemic, with improved activities. The overall patient volumes reached around 75 percent of pre-Covid period. This recovery was over 100 percent in the rural secondary care and primary care vision centres during this month. The resumption of services and the steady increase in activity was uneventful. Our tertiary care campus in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh (Kode Venkatadri Chowdary Campus), actually recorded its highest ever revenue for a month. At this campus, the recently launched ocularist service fabricated and dispensed its first orbital prosthesis this month adding one more dimension to this campus.

India observed “National Eye Donation Fortnight” earlier this month through a variety of activities, and our eye banking group participated actively. We are pleased at the recovery of corneal donations, affected by the pandemic, with our eye banks harvesting 329 corneas during this month. This was the highest number till date post-lockdown. In all, 105,861 corneas were harvested and 59,387 corneas were distributed nationally for corneal transplantation, from our network of eye banks since 1989. Compliments to the entire eye banking team. The support received from various collaborations played a pivotal role.

Our Standard Chartered-LVPEI Academy for Eye Care Education was active during the month with the organization of a variety of programmes. A virtual meeting on “Refractive Surgery” had 24 international speakers from 17 countries and 430 participants from 20 countries.

Even during these trying times, many generous individuals and organisations continued to contribute to our various activities enabling all our projects and growth to continue without interruption. To all of them, we are indebted.

Srinivas Marmamula was appointed on the Technical committee of VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India. Niranjana Pehera delivered the Rustam Ranji Rotary lecture at our Institute and spoke on his Liberian experience. Javed Ali's second major treatise, “Atlas of Lacrimal Drainage Disorders” was published and will now be translated into German. Congratulations to all of them!

The multi-tier pyramid model of our eye care delivery system makes it possible for the people even from rural areas to access high quality advanced tertiary care. The story of a 21 year old woman from remote Ganjam district of Odisha is one such example. She was brought to our Mithu Tulsi Chanrai Campus in Bhubaneswar, travelling a long distance, with a history of sudden loss of sight. The team of Debasmita Majhi and Suryasnata Rath immediately evaluated her condition, made the accurate diagnosis and performed emergency surgery. This resulted in the recovery of her sight, much to the delight of her family. We are happy that we could provide prompt care and the much needed services despite the threat of Covid-19.

- Gullapalli N. Rao