



## October 2020 at LVPEI

The **Thirty Fourth Foundation Day** of the Institute was celebrated virtually on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October. It was on this day that we broke ground for developing the L V Prasad Eye Institute in Banjara Hills of Hyderabad. The five acre parcel of land at this prestigious address was donated by legendary movie Director and Producer, Mr. L. V. Prasad. Mr. N. T. Rama Rao, Chief Minister of the state and a former matinee idol (Mr. Prasad was his mentor) did the honours in the presence of Mr. Prasad, his son Mr. Ramesh Prasad and their families. Our family including our parents, friends and prominent citizens of Hyderabad were present. Special guests included ministers from the states of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra in addition to our state as Mr. Prasad's film career spanned these three states. Thus started the journey of this Institute to realize the dream that Pratibha and I had to "create a model of quality comprehensive care to EVERY ONE in an academic environment". The munificence of Mr. Prasad accelerated the development.

Prof. D V R Seshadri of the Indian School of Business in Hyderabad was the Guest of Honour at the Foundation Day celebrations. With his deep understanding of our Institute, he provided a global perspective of our Institute and called attention to the huge responsibility that lies on our shoulders. Awards were presented to the best performing employees, and those who completed 10 years and above were honoured. Another highlight was a spectacular musical concert by the clients of our Rehabilitation Institute.

A big cause for celebration was the news that we received towards the later part of the month. Four members of our faculty and two of our former faculty (out of nine from India in ophthalmology research) were included in the top 2 percent of scientists in the world by a Stanford University study. This indeed is a rich dividend from the belief and investment (13 percent of budget) we made in research since inception. Congratulations to all those on the list. This should encourage our future generation of bright youngsters to emulate and do even better.

While on this topic, it was good to hear that nine of our research fellows were selected for fellowships of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). This multi-generational performance augurs well for the future of our research. 48 papers were published during this month.

As we navigate through the Covid environment, the patient volumes continued to surge, with the highest numbers recorded this month since March. This was also reflected in the patient care revenues from the paying patients.

One of the worst hit areas has been eye banking but we have continued harvesting a reasonable volume of corneas. 445 corneas were harvested and resulted in 406 transplantations across India with 222 done in our network. Compliments to the eye banking team for their dedicated effort in working through this difficult environment.

Myopia is a problem that is threatening to evolve into a global epidemic. In the recent past, we have accelerated our efforts in this area including an active research component. This month we have inaugurated “The Myopia Centre” at our Hyderabad campus (Kallam Anji Reddy Campus) with support from Infor Pvt. Ltd. This state of the art centre will focus on the prevention and control of this avoidable problem in children. We have also initiated advocacy efforts with the state governments to implement appropriate measures for the control of this problem. Pavan Verkicharla is leading a major research effort on multiple dimensions of this problem. We are grateful for Infor for their generosity.

To coincide with this, we have organized an “Indian Myopia Awareness and Research Conference” during this month. Faculty was drawn from well-known experts in other countries and we had participants from 24 states of India and a few other countries.

The Standard Chartered-LVPEI Academy continued its hectic activities with 16 webinars covering multiple topics and attended by 1300 participants. The annual event “Bug Busters”, a programme on corneal infections was yet another successful educational event attracting a lot of national and international participation.

Silver Sight, our rural programme as part of our “Institute for Eye Care for the Elderly”, has been offering home care to the elderly in rural and remote areas. This includes screening, dispensing spectacles, and tele-consultations from the patients’ homes by a well-trained technician with appropriate PPE and following all Covid protocols. 588 individuals across 28 villages in districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were covered during this month.

The second Thursday of October is the “World Sight Day”. This event inaugurated over twenty years ago brings into focus the global problem of blindness and vision impairment and how most of it is avoidable.

Let me close with this story of a twelve year old girl who visited our Hyderabad campus last year with loss of vision for over two years in her right eye. Her father, a small shop keeper in Delhi approached many centres in the country but couldn’t get any relief for her. When she was examined here, she had severe degree of hypotony (shrinking of the eye) with total cataract due to long standing uncontrolled inflammation, and her other eye showed early signs of a similar problem. She could barely see light out of this eye. Tuberculosis was suspected to be the cause but there were no tell-tale signs even. She was then investigated for Ocular TB at our Bhubaneswar campus (Mithu Tulsi Chanrai). To minimize the financial burden on the family, cataract surgery was performed along with building up the pressure, and was sent back to Delhi the next day. Follow up care was arranged with one of our alumni, supplemented with Tele consultations with our specialist. When Covid made it difficult for her follow up locally, we continued to provide support through Tele consultations. This perseverance in care resulted in restoration of some sight in her right eye and complete resolution of the problem in the left eye. This was possible not only through our determination but also because of the similar attributes in our extended family of alumni. Thanks to Dr. Neha Mohan Jain for being this stellar example.

- Gullapalli N. Rao