



April 2021 at LVPEI

The announcement of the next Chair of our Institute to succeed me was the headline news at the beginning of the month. After the shortlisted six candidates were put through a very intensive process of exposure and indoctrination into various elements of the Institute, the Selection Committee recommended the name of Dr. Prashant Garg for the position. This was then unanimously approved by the Board of Trustees. The other five will play major senior leadership roles in the Institute.

Dr. Prashant Garg is an internationally known cornea specialist, educator and researcher. His work on different aspects of corneal infections is well recognized internationally. He is currently the Director of our Hyderabad and Vijayawada campuses as well as Head of our Eye Banking network. He is involved in several leadership positions in many national and international organizations in the areas of education, eye banking and corneal infections. With a strong publication record in peer reviewed journals and with many research grants, he is a consummate clinician- scientist. He did his medical school and residency training in Jaipur, Rajasthan and cornea fellowship at the L V Prasad Eye Institute in the mid-90s following which he joined our faculty and continued his impressive career with us. We are looking forward to his leadership of our Institute and making it an even more impactful organization. Congratulations Prashant, on this appointment so well deserved.

Our Institute for Vision Rehabilitation continues to enhance its activities in multiple new dimensions through various partnerships. This month, an MOU was signed with a Boston-based organization Vision Aid, for a unique set of innovative programmes that will benefit persons with visual impairment. The collaborative initiatives will focus on four prime areas, (1) evaluate emerging technology and tools and develop alternative devices to those available in the market, at the fraction of the price, with a focus on driving down the cost significantly and bringing these within reach of those who need it most (2) distribution of AI-based devices to those who need but cannot afford these (3) conducting advanced training programmes to the visually impaired on job oriented skills; and comprehensive training programme in Low Vision Services and Vision Rehabilitation for eye care professionals, and (4) engage in cutting edge research in the area of vision impairment. The funding for this came from a generous grant from a successful technology entrepreneur based in Boston, Prashant Palakurthi and his wife, Anuradha. Mr. Palakurthi's father was an ophthalmologist in the coastal town of Machilipatnam in Andhra Pradesh. The Centre will be called "Vasanth-Krupa Palakurthi Vision-Aid Centre of Excellence".

As the ravages of the second and more ferocious wave of COVID began to hit the country, our patient care volumes began to drop towards the later part of the month. We have boosted our readiness efforts to ensure the safety to everyone coming to our campuses across our network. With the experiences of this past year, we are much better prepared to handle the situation and to offer a variety of services through our tele-ophthalmology programme. This will enable continuation of care to those for whom follow up care is critical.



The Standard Chartered-LVPEI Academy for Eye care Education continued to be busy hosting 14 webinars that benefitted nearly 500 professionals. The robust digital education programme had an accelerated evolution during this past year and will continue to be immensely useful this year again.

On the Research front, over 60 peer reviewed publications have kept up the flow that started during last year. This resulted in a record number of publications contributed by the largest percentage of faculty. Sayan Basu's term on the Editorial Board of the British Journal of Ophthalmology was given another five year extension. Javed Ali was appointed as Visiting Professor and expert at the Wojskowy Instytut Medyczny of Warsaw, Poland. Sujata Das's book on "Infections of the Cornea and Conjunctiva" along with Vishal Jhanji of the University of Pittsburgh was published. On the academic front, our doctoral student Poonam Naik continued to excel with one more recognition, the "Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Travel Award" to attend the World Microbe Forum.

The impact of the Covid crisis on our team and their families brought them closer together as one family with many gestures of support to each other. This was exemplified by the help extended by Dr. Virender Sachdeva, Head of Children's Eye Care Centre at our Visakhapatnam campus, to the parents and family of a doctoral student in Hyderabad. When multiple members of this family had symptoms of Covid, he helped with arranging timely testing and appropriate care, leading to their complete recovery. Thanks to Virender for demonstrating our value of "togetherness" so well.

- Gullapalli N. Rao