



September 2021 at LVPEI

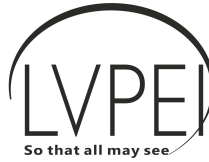
September month was full of excitement – recognising the contributions of one of our employees, formalizing a relationship with one of our long term friends, ushering a new partnership, preparation for a new frontier and a unique monthly meeting revisiting the journey of L V Prasad Eye Institute under the leadership of Nag Rao.

LVPEI has a long tradition of recognizing contributions of its employees in various ways. Two such initiatives are the institution of named Chairs and naming specific functional units to honour individuals who have made long-term contributions to the evolution of LVPEI and a lasting impact in their field. This month, it was the turn of our Executive Vice Chair, Ramam Atmakuri, when we have named our technology building after him and his wife. “The Poornima and Ramam Atmakuri Technology Centre” was inaugurated on September 22 by Mr. K T Rama Rao, Minister for Municipal Administration, Urban development, Industries, Commerce and Information technology, Government of Telangana. Ramam joined LVPEI in 2014, after a successful corporate career leading several multinational technology firms, and ably steered the technology, innovation, business and operational aspects of our Institute. Under his leadership, substantial progress was made in these areas and valuable partnerships were developed, which put LVPEI in the forefront of technological advancements in eye care.

Mr Vellanki Venkateswara Rao, an engineer by profession and a long-term friend and well-wisher of LVPEI has stood by the organisation in good and difficult times. This association was further strengthened by his daughter Sridevi and son-in-law Suresh Challa’s decision to support a state of art Cataract care facility at our Institute. “Vellanki Venkateswara Rao and Vijaya Kumari Cataract Centre” was formally inaugurated at our Kode Venkatadri Chowdary campus, Vijayawada on September 3 by Mr Mukesh Kumar Meena, IAS and Secretary in Industries and Commerce Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh. We are grateful to Sridevi and Suresh Challa for their generous gesture. This support will facilitate increased services to the underprivileged population in and around Vijayawada and enhance training of ophthalmologists in cataract surgery.

Establishing a formal partnership with the GITAM University in Hyderabad by signing an MoU for a four-year undergraduate Bachelor of Optometry (B.Optom) program was another important event. Earlier, this program was conducted in association with Birla Institute of Technology, Pilani Rajasthan, but was discontinued 5 years ago. We are happy to reinstate this course with GITAM University and contribute to the growth of this cadre of eye care professionals. This effort was led by Avinash Pathengay and Shrikant Bharadwaj. Shrikant has designed a unique curriculum that allows a mix of classroom teaching and clinical training right from the start of the course. The new curriculum introduces students to technologies such as artificial intelligence and deep learning for improving patient experience.

The Standard Chartered-LVPEI Academy for Eye Care Education continued its efforts towards disseminating new knowledge, and conducted 24 webinars attended by 1277 eye care professionals. One of these webinars focussed on developing comprehensive eye care plans for the elderly, which coincides with our new initiative on Elderly Eye Care. The speakers from India, Australia, Canada and the USA provided new insights on the health problems of the elderly, such as prevalence of falls, vision and hearing loss, vision impairment and dementia; and the participants deliberated on how to holistically manage these issues. Our compliments to Dr Umesh Behra and the entire team at the Centre for Elderly Eye Care, for their efforts towards creating awareness and addressing this emerging challenge, and joining the global efforts in finding solutions.



Recognising that the aging population and related health issues are on the rise, Srinivas Marmamula initiated one of the largest eye health studies in homes for the aged called “The Hyderabad Ocular Morbidity among Elderly Study (HOMES)”. A recent report from this study published in *Scientific Reports* highlighted that depression was 5 times higher among those elderly participants who had combined hearing and visual impairment. The study stressed the need for the assessment of elderly population for dual sensory impairment and necessary management.

In India the National Eye Donation Fortnight is observed from October 25 to September 8 every year. It is a campaign that aims to increase public awareness about the importance of eye donation and to motivate people to pledge their eyes. Besides conducting activities for enhancing awareness, the eye banks in our network harvested 1068 corneas and distributed 813 of these for sight restoring surgeries in the month of September. This was the highest ever monthly numbers for our network. Ramayamma International Eye bank, at our Hyderabad campus, alone harvested 768 corneas and distributed 587 of these for corneal surgery. Kudos to the entire eye bank team for working tirelessly and making available the precious gift of sight. There could not have been a better way to observe the fortnight.

Let me end this monthly newsletter by sharing with you excerpts from the special monthly meeting held on the evening of September 30. This end of month staff meeting was a very special event with the entire network participating. On that day, we together re-visited the 35 year journey of our Institute and the leadership of our founder chair Nag Rao. Friends around the globe shared their experiences and association with Nag and the Institute. Nag addressed the entire network and formally handed over the responsibility of leading the organisation to the new leadership team. It was a momentous occasion for all of us at LVPEI. Nag will continue on the faculty and provide mentorship to some of the eye health programmes.

I feel very honoured to assume the responsibilities of this impactful organization and look forward to working with all the supporters and collaborators around the world.

- Prashant Garg