

October 2021 at LVPEI

October month has a special place in the LVPEI journey. Thirty-five years ago, on October 17th, 1986, the then Chief Minister of United Andhra Pradesh, Dr N T Rama Rao, laid the foundation stone of our organization. At that time Dr Nag Rao, the Founder Chairman had a simple vision of creating an advanced tertiary eye care centre providing care to ALL those in need irrespective of the complexity of treatment and the ability to pay. Education and research, and also rehabilitation of those with irreversible blindness have been part of our Institute from the outset. Over time the Institute not only grew in size but added more functional arms. Currently our network comprises of 237 locations and 10 functional arms, covering the entire spectrum of eye care from screening of population to management of complex diseases; rehabilitation of those suffering with incurable blindness; and is actively involved in creation and dissemination of new knowledge, capacity building, eye banking, technology innovation, advocacy, policy and planning.

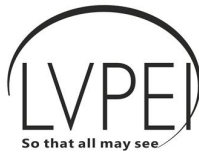
On our 35th Foundation Day celebration this year, Dr Jayprakash Narayan, a physician by training and former civil services official from the Indian Administrative Services was the Chief Guest. He inspired our group by talking about current healthcare scenario and abundance of opportunities available at our disposal to improve and expand our services and bring about a positive change in the society. He provided a wider perspective quoting several facts from diverse areas. It was a scintillating lecture that gave an impetus to our group to do better in the coming years.

The highlight of this day was the institution of 'LVPEI Research Excellence Award' sponsored by Prof Krothapalli Ravindranath, a philanthropist and well-wisher of our Institute. Pratima Vishwakarma, Clinical Ophthalmology Fellow, and Sushma Vishwakarma, Basic Science Research Fellow bagged the Inaugural award. Congratulations to both the recipients. We are grateful to Prof Ravindranath for his encouragement to our research activities.

To commemorate the Foundation Day, our team organized a blood donation drive on October 23rd. A total of 189 donors representing employees, their family members, trainees, and outsourced staff came forward to donate blood. I wholeheartedly thank all the donors for their invaluable donation. Their support during this time is priceless and exhibits the resilience of human spirit during these challenging times. As per the information from the NTR Memorial Trust Blood Bank, with whom we partner for this initiative, this was the highest number of donors in a single drive organized by them during this year in Hyderabad (2021) and were very appreciative of the generosity of our team.

The second important event of the month was the 27th Annual meeting of the Indian Eye Research Group (IERG). The IERG started as the Hyderabad Eye Research Group primarily through the efforts of Dr Nag Rao and Prof D Balasubramanian to create a platform for interaction between clinicians and basic science researchers engaged in eye and vision research. The group has grown bigger over the years and is currently an ARVO India Chapter. This year the meeting was attended by 450 delegates and had 3 orations, 72 free papers 147 posters and 4 pre-conference workshops. The meeting concluded with a decision to focus efforts on lobbying with the Government funding agencies to take up eye research as priority area, and earmark separate funding for vision research on the lines of National Eye Institute, USA. My best wishes to the leadership of IERG for success in their efforts in this direction.

October 14th is observed as The World Sight Day. The theme for this year was 'Love Your Eyes'. Team LVPEI organized various eye screening and awareness programs across the network. Dr Rohit Khanna, Director of Community Eye Health and Regional Chair of IAPB South East Asia, delivered the message "Let us together take care of our eyes and ensure good eye health".



LVPEI has always been a leader in the area of eye and tissue banking. This month the Drushti Daan Eye Bank at LVPEI's Mithu Tulsi Chanrai Campus, Bhubaneswar attained a significant milestone crossing the 10,000 corneas collection mark. The eye bank started its services in March 2002 and in July 2007 became a part of LVPEI eye bank network. Join me in applauding the entire eye bank team on achieving this milestone.

Three years earlier we initiated a program of setting up of world class eye banks in other states of India in partnership with The Hans Foundation and the local health authorities. Two of these eye banks in Guwahati and Rishikesh are functional. Varanasi Eye Bank at the Institute of Medical Sciences, BHU Campus, Varanasi will be the third such eye bank and the construction activity started this month.

The Institute for Vision Rehabilitation continues to expand its services. This month, two Vocational units for people with vision impairment were set up at the Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam campuses, as part of the Livelihood Skill Development Program initiated some time ago. These units were made possible by the generous support of Mr Agadi Krishna and Mrs Agadi Pratibha in the memory of Sri Agadi Naga Sai Rohit. I express my gratitude to the couple for their generosity.

Our team continues to bring laurels to the Institute and makes us proud. Dr Milind Naik has been elected as the General Secretary of the Oculoplasty Association of India. Satyashree Gagan and Jacquelyn Akepogu received Lady Tata Junior Research Fellowship awards. Dr Sujata Das delivered Prof Biswambhar Rajguru Oration during the annual meeting of the Odisha State Ophthalmology Society. Preetirupa Devi, Rohit Dhakal, Harini Indusekar and Bhagya Lakshmi Marella received best paper awards at the 2nd IVI International Optometry Conference. Drs Manju Bhate, Sonalika Gogia, Debsmita Majhi, Rohan Nalawade and Divya Natarajan also received awards at the Indian Neuro Ophthalmology Society meetings. Congratulations to all the award winners.

All these, in addition to the 13 webinars benefiting 987 participants conducted by the Standard Chartered-LVPEI Academy for Eye Care Education, made this month special for us at LVPEI.

Let me end this note by sharing the story of a little boy Vivek, who presented with loss of vision from corneal scarring. The problem started as a trivial injury while taking bath that grew into a huge hematoma involving his face and eyes. He underwent hematoma drainage and required multiple blood and blood product transfusions, and in the course of this treatment developed corneal opacity. He was then referred to LVPEI for possible corneal transplantation. On investigation, the child was found to be suffering from a rare disorder "Congenital Hypofibrinogenemia" where the blood lacks fibrinogen, a protein essential for clotting. Corneal transplantation was performed under general anaesthesia, and for safe surgery 56 units of cryoprecipitate, a part of the blood containing blood clotting factors was required. This was a huge requirement and a challenge to obtain. The NTR Trust Blood Bank came forward and helped us to meet this demand, and little Vivek's sight could be restored. This was possible because of the goodwill built by our Institute through our partnership and efforts in mobilising blood donation over the years by our employees. This has been a commendable gesture by our team. I feel privileged to lead such a wonderful team.

-Prashant Garg