



December 2021 at LVPEI

I was filled with joy as I sat down to write this note. December 2021 was full of activities and achievements for many groups in the LVPEI network.

On December 20, 2021, our Institute reached a major milestone when we celebrated the Silver Jubilee of our first rural secondary eye care centre, the *Bhosle Gopal Rao Patil Eye Centre* in Mudhole, a remote rural village in Nirmal district of Telangana. Twenty-five years ago, the idea to create a permanent facility 250 kilometres away from Hyderabad, in a village deep inside a Maoist infested area, with poor access and connectivity was greeted with scepticism. It was the determination of Nag Rao, our Founder Chairman and the support from two prominent non-governmental organizations Christoffel Blindenmission (CBM) and Sightsavers, along with GRAM, a local community development organization, and Mr Narayana Rao Patil, a local philanthropist that helped us realize this dream. This centre in Mudhole represented an audacious plan to take eye care to those who needed it the most, in a setting that was permanent and would be a symbol of our commitment to quality.

In 25 years, the centre has served close to half a million people, achieved 45% cataract surgical coverage and a 26% reduction in blindness and vision impairment in the population aged 50 years and over. The centre has participated in several public health research studies, including the landmark Andhra Pradesh Eye Disease Study (APEDS). Today, the centre provides a complete spectrum of comprehensive eye care from promotion and prevention to advanced subspecialty surgical procedures such as lamellar keratoplasty; as well as rehabilitation of those suffering with incurable blindness. Despite providing more than 50 percent of its services at no cost to the patients, the centre is financially sustainable. The centre is a proof that successful delivery of high-quality health care is possible even in remote rural areas. We celebrated this historical moment with Mr Patil and the staff members of the centre, majority of whom have been a part of this extraordinary journey from the start. The credit for the success of the centre goes entirely to these heroes and to the support from the local community.

Another highlight of the month is the inauguration of two speciality centres. "The Ramoji Foundation Centre for Eye Infections" at Kallam Anji Reddy Campus, Hyderabad will focus on all aspects of eye infections. The support for the centre came from Mr Ramoji Rao, Founder and Chairman of Ramoji Foundation and a renowned media tycoon. This centre will help our group make further progress in this area, as we deal with one of the highest volumes of eye infections in the world. "The Kalathur Venugopal Reddy Glaucoma Centre" at the Kode Venkatadri Chowdary Campus, Vijayawada is supported by Ms Kavita Kalathur and Mr Ravi Kolli, a young philanthropist couple of Indian origin settled in the USA. With the inauguration of this centre, the state of Andhra Pradesh will have a fully developed facility to tackle the problem of glaucoma. We are grateful to these philanthropists for their generous gesture.

It was a moment of great satisfaction when we received the joyful news from two of our clients at the Institute for Vision Rehabilitation (IVR) about their successful placements. Born with irreversible blindness, both of them availed our services from early childhood and became part of the LVPEI family. The joy of watching them grow and realize their full potential and now gain financial independence cannot be described in words. The efforts of mentoring by our IVR team resulted in successful placements of 10 such clients in December month this year. I congratulate all such successes and send them our best wishes for their successful careers.



Graduation day is a very special event for every educational institution. This year, 232 trainees-- Ophthalmologists, Optometrists, Vision Technicians, Ophthalmic Nurse Assistants and Eye Health Management trainees--graduated from the Standard Chartered-LVPEI Academy of Eye Care Education. Mr Bharat Mathukumilli, an alumnus of Stanford University and President of the well-known GITAM University, was the chief guest. Although the entire ceremony was held in virtual mode due to COVID restrictions, the enthusiasm and joy of the graduating students and their mentors was palpable. Do join me in congratulating the graduating students and their proud parents, and wishing them the very best as they move into the next phase of their life. It is with great pleasure I welcome the new graduates to join our extended family of LVPEI Alumni.

Ramayamma International Eye Bank at LVPEI's Hyderabad campus achieved yet another milestone in December. By distributing 5000+ transplantable corneas across India in a single year, it continues to be the largest eye bank in Asia and one of the top performing eye banks across the globe. This is another area where our determination has overcome the scepticism expressed at inception about the success of eye banking in India.

Several of our faculty members received accolades and enhanced the prestige of our organisation. The youngest member of our faculty, Swati Singh received the prestigious Senior Alexander Von Humboldt Research Award of Germany as well as the DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance's Early Career Fellowship. Swati is the second clinician-scientist from LVPEI to win the Von Humboldt Research Award. Swathi Kaliki received the prestigious ICMR-Novartis Oration Award; Subhabrata Chakrabarti was elected as an ARVO Gold Fellow; Raja Narayanan was elected as fellow of the Academy of Asia Pacific Professors of Ophthalmology; and Vivek Dave and G Chandra Sekhar delivered prestigious named lectures at the meetings of the Vitreoretinal Society and Glaucoma Society of India respectively. My congratulations to all of them.

Let me conclude this newsletter with a story of little Hethwik served at our Vijayawada campus. This three-year old boy suffered a severe eye injury due to an accidental fall from the bed. Despite a successful surgery for scleral tear repair, little Hethwik's vision could not be restored because of irregular curvature of the front of his eye – structure known as Cornea. If left untreated this would have led to disuse or amblyopia, permanently reducing his vision in the injured eye. Realizing the importance of immediate intervention, the contact lens team led by our optometrist Prabhu successfully fitted Hethwik with a speciality contact lens called PROSE lens. It was for the first time that this lens was prescribed to such a young child. Prabhu and the entire team at KVC campus deserve our applause for their collective efforts in preserving the eye and vision of young Hethwik, through this pioneering effort.

Until next time, do take care and keep yourself safe in these troubled times.

- Prashant Garg