



July 2022 at LVPEI

Providing high-quality eye care is not the same as delivering it to those in need. More than a decade ago, Prof Julio Frenk and his colleagues had this to say in the Lancet: “[Despite advances in modern science,] Glaring gaps and inequities in health persist both within and between countries, underscoring our collective failure to share dramatic health advances equitably.” At LVPEI, we have always believed and practiced Excellence with Equity. These are two of our five core values. To promote access of good quality eye health services for all, we innovated a pyramidal model of healthcare delivery (LVPEI’s pyramid of eye health), implemented it in our network and established its efficacy through systematic research. During the COVID 19 pandemic, LVPEI doubled down on teleophthalmology and subsequently even developed teleophthalmology software. Teleophthalmology enhanced our availability and reach, ensuring our services to the many who were unable to travel. In my mind, LVPEI’s innovations in access are just as important as our ability to provide world-class eye care. So, I would like to dedicate the July newsletter to “Universal Eye Health – quality eye health services for all”.

Improving access: on the ground and in policy

In July, we initiated several new projects centred around improving healthcare access in remote rural areas and to marginalized communities. Take “Sight for All: Community-based inclusive eye health” that was launched in Nirmal district, Telangana. The project will comprise door-to-door screening of more than 400 villages covering a population of 700,000 people. Those identified with vision and eye problems will be referred for a comprehensive eye examination and care, including provision of spectacles, surgical intervention, or vision rehabilitation. There will be a special focus on vulnerable populations: the elderly, women, children, and people with disabilities. Nirmal’s ‘Sight For All’ is supported by the Christoffel-Blindenmission (CBM), who is also one of the primary supporters of our first secondary centre, “the Bhosle Gopal Rao Patil Eye Center” in Mudhole, Nirmal district. The launch of the project is an excellent supplement to the silver jubilee celebrations of this centre. I would like to thank CBM for partnering with us in eliminating needless vision loss.

There is also “Reaching out with Innovative Services for Eye care (RISE)” in Maheshwaram Mandal, Ranga Reddy District on the outskirts of Hyderabad. This project, initiated by our colleague Srinivas Marmamula, will provide eye care coverage to half-a-million people.

Conversations on eye care delivery, especially from a public policy perspective, are key to solving issues of access. We hosted a regional meeting of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) at the Kallam Anji Reddy campus, Hyderabad in July, discussing just such perspectives. The theme of the meeting was “Making eye care services accessible for 1 billion people living with the consequences of sight loss”. The meeting titled “2030 In Sight - Implementing Integrated People-centred Eye Care in South-East Asia” had representation from prominent eye health leaders, organizations including the World Health Organization and government ministries from the region. We deliberated on promoting eye health as a development issue, embedding it into the Sustainable Development Goals agenda and implementing Integrated People-centred Eye Care. Rohit Khanna, the IAPB regional Chair and head of the Gullapalli Pratibha Rao International Centre for Advancement of Rural Eye Care (GPRICARE), was the organising Chair of the meeting.

Milestones and laurels

In July, the Mithu Tulsī Chanrai (MTC) campus, Bhubaneswar and the GMR Varalakshmi (GMRV) campus, Visakhapatnam completed 16 years of providing excellent, equitable, and comprehensive eye care. During these 16 years each of the campuses provided outpatient services to 1.5 million outpatients and performed 170,000 eye surgeries of various complexities. Both campuses are actively contributing to training, clinical research, capacity building, community outreach, eye banking, rehabilitation for those with incurable vision loss, and advocacy policy planning.



Prof Jeevan Singh Titiyal, Chief of Rajendra Prasad Centre of Ophthalmic Sciences, AIIMS, New Delhi joined us at the MTC campus during the anniversary celebrations and also delivered the 12th Prof C S Bhaskaran Endowment Lecture. I would like to thank Prof Titiyal for being a part of our celebrations.

At our Kode Venkatadri Chowdary (KVC) Campus in Vijayawada, we started a specialized Binocular Vision and Orthoptics Clinic. This clinic specializes in providing “prism” spectacles, and other specialty spectacles for occupational needs as well as vision therapy or eye exercises to address digital eye strain, visual fatigue, headache, reading difficulties, double vision, and related ocular conditions. This is the first such service in Andhra Pradesh.

The eye bank team in our network continues to bring laurels and make us proud. This month the Global Alliance of Eye Bank Association (GAEBA) recognised LVPEI’s contributions to promoting eye banking and professional exchanges, human resource development, quality improvement in cornea processing, and bringing overall improvement in the care of corneally blind patients. A panel of independent, international peers noted that LVPEI has demonstrated exceptional leadership, shared best practices, and helped build capacity in low resource countries. The GAEBA National Award was given to LVPEI for showing openness and willingness to collaborate with others and for our commitment to training and supporting other eye banks in the country.

In addition, several members of our team received recognitions and awards. Vijaya Kumari Gothwal was appointed the President of the International Society for Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation; Tarjani Dave was invited to be an Associate member of the Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology Leadership Development Standing Committee; Vivek Singh and Indumathi Mariappan were elected to be members of the editorial boards of the Frontiers in Medicine Ophthalmology section and Stem Cells Translational Medicine journals respectively. At the 2022 photography contest organised by the American Academy of Optometry, Kiruthika Kannan won the Grand Prize, Krushna Gopal Panda received two honourable mentions, and Vinodh Kumar received the second honourable mention for their clinical photographs. Sai Anusha--a technical assistant trainee at the Standard Chartered-LVPEI Academy for Eye Care Education--won the Pixoto Rising Star Award for her photograph. At the 7th annual meeting of the Telangana Ophthalmology Society, several of our team members bagged awards. Our compliments and best wishes to all of them.

Innovating for access

I would like to end this month’s newsletter with a story on innovation. In the month of July, Tapas Ranjan Padhi and his team figured out how to run live, real-time tele-screening of tiny, pre-term babies for retinopathy of prematurity (ROP). ROP is a blinding eye condition that crops up in many pre-term babies; screening and identifying the early signs can save sight. In the past, pre-term babies had to be brought to a centre with the facility to screen them, or an ophthalmologist would have to travel to the neonatology units. Tapas’ innovation allows an expert to screen babies live from a distant location—and what’s more, Tapas screened 92 babies on a single day in just over 6 hours! Tele-screening is all set to revolutionize ROP screening and will expand it into small towns and villages. This innovation came out of our current project in the Sundargarh district of Odisha, supported by the Cognizant Foundation. Tapas’ thirst for a solution to an intractable access issue, and his commitment to finding it, has made us all proud. I would like to congratulate Tapas and his team for this wonderful innovation and for pushing the frontiers to achieve our vision: “So That ALL May See”. My thanks also to the Cognizant foundation for enabling such innovations.

-Prashant Garg