

The LV Prasad Eye Institute was chosen for the Greenberg Prize – End Blindness 2020, and the Outstanding Achievement award will be presented to its founder, Dr Gullapalli Nageswara Rao.

Hyderabad Doc Who Returned From US to Help the Blind Wins \$3 Million *Global Prize*



LV Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI), a World Health Organisation (WHO) collaborating centre for the prevention of blindness, is a comprehensive eye health facility headquartered in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. Recently, it was

chosen for the Greenberg Prize — End Blindness 2020 and the Outstanding Achievement award, which will be presented to its founder Dr Gullapalli Nageswara Rao.

The purpose of the Greenberg Prize is to create a worldwide research community that will contribute its collective skills and resources to end blindness. The winners are chosen based on the strength of their contributions towards this goal and are awarded prize money of \$3 million.

LVPEI, with 3 tertiary, 20 secondary and 184 primary care centres, has benefitted more than 15 million patients in India. Here are some things you should know about Dr Rao:

Family legacy

Dr Rao decided to become an Ophthalmologist because he wanted to follow the footsteps of his father, who was a legendary doctor named Govindappa Venkataswamy and the founder of Aravind Eye Hospital, Chennai.



After completing his basic medical education in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, Dr Rao completed his postgraduate residency training in Ophthalmology at the All India Institute for Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi. In 1974, he went to the United States of America where he trained at the Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston. Then, he trained and taught for a while at the Rochester School of Medicine.

Apart from training abroad, Dr Rao was also a visiting professor at several universities in the USA, Europe, Australia and Asia. His areas of specialisation include diseases of the cornea, eye banking, corneal transplantation, eye care policy and planning.

Till date, Dr Rao has published more than 300 papers in national and international journals and has served on the editorial boards of several journals.

Launching LV Prasad Eye Institute

In 1981, Dr Rao and his wife returned to India. In an interview with Factor Daily, he says that he decided to return to India because he wanted to build an eye centre that would encompass patient care, education, and research, in Hyderabad.

After he returned, he donated all his savings to ophthalmic corporations, and he approached the former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh — NT Rama Rao to provide him land to establish an educational institute. The land allotted by the CM was used to open the public health and optometric education department.

In 1985, he further received Rs 5 crores and 5 acres of land from Ramesh Prasad, the son of popular movie director LV Prasad after which he launched the LV Prasad Eye Institute.

Some of his achievements include:

The former secretary-general and later the CEO of the International Agency for Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) played a pivotal role in developing and fostering the global initiative to eliminate avoidable blindness along with WHO.

In 2002, he was honoured by the Government of India with the fourth highest Indian civilian award — Padma Shri.

In 2017, Dr Rao was inducted into the Ophthalmology Hall of Fame at the meeting of American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) in Los Angeles. In the past three centuries, only 57 ophthalmologists from around the world have been inducted into the Hall of Fame.

During an interview with Forbes magazine, Dr Rao shares that when KR Narayanan, the former President of India, developed a cataract, his secretary, Gopalkrishna Gandhi, asked for his opinion. Though the first citizen of India was recommended surgery, Dr Rao did not do it himself because he had stopped operating after he turned 55. When the President's secretary asked him to do them a favour and conduct the operation himself, Dr Rao reportedly replied with — "I am doing you a favour by not operating on him".

On being awarded the Greenberg Prize, Dr Rao said, "I feel humbled and honoured to accept this prestigious award on behalf of the 3000-strong family of LVPEI. Eliminating avoidable blindness by the year 2020 has been an aspiration of the global eye care community for over two decades."

According to news reports, the Greenberg Prize awards ceremony will be live-streamed at 5:30 IST on 15 December 2020, and the link can be found on the official website.

<https://www.thebetterindia.com/244433/lv-prasad-eye-institute-blindness-greenberg-prize-outstanding-achievement-award-ophthalmologist-ros174/>