

A 'Patient First' New Year

2024 is winding down--and what a year it has been! It is easy to lose our heads in the here-and-now, missing some of the big wins this year. As the year draws to a close, it's the perfect time to reflect on what we've achieved and set our sights on the year ahead.

LVPEI's promise has always been about marrying excellence with equity. 2024 began with a beacon of this promise, the **Bhosle Gopal Rao Patil Eye centre** in Mudhole, Telangana receiving the NABH (National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers) certificate under the "Small Healthcare Organization (SHCO) Accreditation" category. In fact, 2024 was the year our network crossed the notional mark of 300—we are now at **308 centres** across southern and eastern India.

In February, we saw the delivery of another key aspect of the LVPEI promise - taking eye care closer to people who need them. Together with the Infosys Foundation and Infosys Ltd., we launched [the SightConnect app](#). The app uses AI-powered tools to detect signs of any eye and vision abnormalities and guides patients to their nearest eye centre for care. The app also functions as a secure, personal repository of patient visit data and works seamlessly with India's digital health infrastructure. This app is available on the major app stores and allows users to assess the status of their eye health—do use it and share it with others.

In April, the team at Kode Venkatadri Chowdary campus in Vijayawada achieved a major milestone. It is the first and only centre in Andhra Pradesh to offer **intra-arterial chemotherapy** for retinoblastoma – an eye cancer of young children. More recently, in the month of November, the same team also performed their first **plaque brachytherapy** (a form of radiation treatment for ocular tumors), demonstrating their quest for excellence. In May, over 2,000 runners sprinted and shuffled to mark **Whitathon 2024**—our annual run to draw attention to this eye cancer. In June, the GMR Varalakshmi campus in Visakhapatnam was certified a 'best green space'. By 2024, we had performed over **50,000 corneal transplants** since inception, and our partner centre in West Africa, **the Liberia Eye Centre**, managed 100,000 patient visits since its inception 7 years ago! This year we also celebrated a climb up the **SCIMAGO Institutional Rankings** charts for Health and Ophthalmology: we were ranked 6th (up from 8th in 2023). These ranks were bookended by some breakthrough announcements from our research teams in **gene therapies** for intractable vision loss.

All of this demonstrates the relentless drive and commitment of every member of the LVPEI family. I am deeply grateful for the hard work and dedication of my colleagues and team members across all levels. It is your passion, your expertise, and your staunch commitment to our shared mission that have made these achievements possible. We know that **access to eye care** remains a critical issue, and we are determined to rise to the challenges of the future. The progress we've made is the result of our shared vision, dedication, and passion for making a real difference in the lives of those who need it most.

I believe that at the core of LVPEI's success is our ability to articulate a unique vision, hold fast to it, and make it work for our patients, donors, and our colleagues too, at every opportunity. Looking ahead to 2025 we have set our sights on several key focus areas. **Elderly eye care** and **LVPEI@Home** (our initiative to bring eye care to the homes of immobile elderly and disabled individuals) are going to be major focus areas. We will continue to address pressing issues such as **Myopia**, eye problems in newborns and pre-mature babies, and care for marginalized and tribal communities. Inspired by the milestone of performing 50,000 cornea transplantations, our cornea team is working on an ambitious multipronged program for reducing the prevalence of cornea blindness. **New technologies**—an updated electronic medical record system, a digital 'front door' platform—should enhance our patient care experience. Our **community eye health** team will work to strengthen community-based and centre-based primary care by taking more treatment options further down the pyramid.

At the centre of all this effort is every individual in the need of eye care.

As we grow and expand, step up and embrace technologies and address the demands of emerging challenges, it is crucial that we stay true to the core values that have brought us this far: *Patient first, Excellence, Equity, Togetherness, and Integrity*. These values continue to guide our work and shape the experience of everyone we serve—patients, staff, donors, and supporters. We will continue our efforts to instill these values across the network. The health of the institute then, is intertwined with our ability to keep the patients and their needs at the forefront while remaining anchored to our values. At every fork in the road, we will continue to ask if our choice is courteous and if it preserves the dignity of the patient.

None of this would be possible without the unwavering support of our donors, alumni, and friends from around the world. Your faith and encouragement have been instrumental in our success, and for that, I offer my heartfelt gratitude. I look forward to cherishing these relationships in the future. Together, let us celebrate these milestones and work towards new ones in the future.

With that, dear friends, may I wish you a very happy and fulfilling new year! I look forward to the promise of the future.

-Prashant Garg