

Patient Journey

Healthcare today is increasingly being evaluated through the lens of efficiency, much like any other service industry. Patients now expect timely appointments with the ‘best’ doctors, quick responses, great facilities, and a seamless experience—similar to what they receive in the hospitality sector.

However, healthcare is inherently difficult. It is a dynamic and complex field where each patient presents with a unique set of conditions, especially at a referral centre. Emergencies, complications, and the demand for individualised attention make it difficult to consistently meet such high expectations on all fronts. This challenge is further compounded by the mismatch between the rising demand for services and the limited availability of skilled healthcare professionals.

The L V Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI) network delivered 2.4 million consultations last year—remarkably, nearly 25% of this volume was managed by our quaternary care centre in Hyderabad alone. But what does that number really mean in practice? What does it take to deliver on LVPEI’s commitment—a comprehensive eye exam and a high-quality care experience—to the millions who walk through our doors each year?

These are not just operational questions. They represent the underlying complexity of delivering quality care at scale. From a patient’s perspective, this must translate into an experience that is seamless, meaningful, and impactful. Patients should feel satisfied at the end of their journey through the system, and their outcomes should reflect our core mission—to offer excellent eye care to all who need it, and rehabilitation for those with irreversible sight loss.

A phone call

Asiya, a patient from West Bengal, tries calling our toll-free number to book an appointment at the Quaternary Centre in Hyderabad. After a few rings, she ends the call. Within 30 minutes, she receives a call back from LVPEI’s call centre. Her left eye has been red and watering for some time. Despite visiting several local doctors, her symptoms have persisted. She now seeks a fresh consultation with an LVPEI doctor, on a day when her family will be visiting Hyderabad.

LVPEI’s ‘Universal’ Call Centre (UCC) handles between 3,800-4,500 calls like Asiya’s every day. People reach out to schedule appointments across our Hyderabad centres or to seek information. A dedicated team of 40 staff manage this massive volume in three shifts, operating from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., six days a week. Working in coordination with the admins of our centres (we have 3 satellite centres with outpatient and surgery facilities, apart from the Quaternary Centre, in different parts of Hyderabad), this team helps schedule nearly 25,000 appointments over any given two-month period. This is a mammoth, multilingual operation that manages everything from appointment slots to grievances. The team answers inbound calls, monitors missed calls and returns them within a short window, coordinates with patient care teams across centres, books or reschedules appointments as needed, and carefully guides patients to an appropriate specialist.

In Asiya’s case, her symptoms could point to several possible issues. The call centre operator listens carefully and runs her complaints through a decision-tree to triage her to the relevant clinic.

The appointment

Early mornings at the Hyderabad campus are buzzing with activity. Patients begin arriving as early as 5 am, some even earlier. Many have travelled long distances from across India. About 20-30% of them are 'walk-ins', arriving without a prior appointment. Those with scheduled slots are encouraged to report to the clinics only 15 minutes before their appointed time. Walk-in patients are triaged based on clinical need and the availability of cancelled or rescheduled slots.

Asiya and her family arrive 30 minutes before their scheduled appointment. After checking in, her husband accompanies her into the outpatient department (OPD). Following the initial work-up, the clinical team realises that she needs to be seen by the cornea clinic, not oculoplasty, where she was originally scheduled. This is tough: our cornea clinics are one of the busiest in the country. Our specialists handle close to 70-100 patients on their clinic days, a mix of those who pay and those cannot afford to. Apart from the scheduled appointments and walk-ins, the system will need to find a slot for Asiya's cross-consult referral.

The entire appointment, referral, and transfer process is handled by our in-house electronic medical record (EMR) system, EyeSmart, a robust platform developed in close collaboration between software engineers and eye care professionals. A few years ago, we also introduced Cerebro, our self-check-in kiosk system, which digitises the entry process right at the door. A cross-post on EyeSmart redirects Asiya's case details to the appropriate team of corneal specialists, and she is guided to another floor. Asiya is now with the right pair of hands.

Technology has transformed our patient care process in numerous ways. Asiya received timely SMS reminders about her appointment. After her examination, her diagnostic scans and medical reports were shared with her on WhatsApp. Three hours after checking in, Asiya is ready to leave. Before she exits, she is invited to scan a QR code to share feedback online. Her follow-up appointment has already been booked and confirmed via message.

Behind the curtain

When I review a patient's records or perform surgery, I often pause to reflect on what it took to bring that individual before me. At LVPEI, clinicians have limited patient-facing days—we also spend time in research labs, academic sessions, or administrative responsibilities. On a typical day, I may examine over 70 patients or operate on 15 eyes. Each patient is made possible by a combination of automated reminders, human follow-ups, and logistical coordination. It often takes several reminders from our patient care team before an out-patient or surgery appointment is scheduled and completed. The patients too graciously stick to their appointed slots, and those who cannot, give it up for the walk-ins. This is a community of care providers and beneficiaries working together to make eye care possible.

The LVPEI call centre is a large, sunlit, and airy space buzzing with energy. Potted plants line the room and staff, seated at their workstations, speak into headsets. At the entrance, a set of low tables hold around 30 smartphones—the team leave their personal devices here before beginning their shift. Saiteja Goriga, who leads our Universal Call Centre (UCC), has been instrumental in driving improvements in both efficiency and patient satisfaction. When she stepped into the role a few months ago, the centre was handling nearly 60,000 calls per month, with almost 50% being repeat attempts—patients trying again after failing to get through the first time. Saiteja and her

team have brought that count down to the 30,000 mark, and they have a list of issues they are whittling down patiently.

At the Quaternary Centre, Babu Rao and Sujatha Mishra head our patient care teams. Together with floor managers and support staff, they ensure patients are guided through their care journey, from arrival to consultation, from diagnostics to follow-up. These teams represent the beating heart of our patient journey. This is by no means a smooth operation: patients may be unhappy with the slot, or the time spent with a doctor, or even their experience with staff. The teams will conduct a comprehensive review of all aspects of patient care in 2026. The ambition is to improve every step of the patient experience. We learn every day, and I am grateful for every individual in this system who helps ensure that all may see.

-Prashant Garg