

May at LVPEI

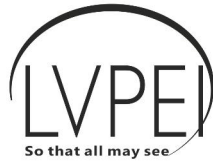
Odisha (formerly Orissa) is a state in India endowed with rich bounty of natural mineral resources. Most of the state's population however, has no access to proper health care and so it is with eye care. About a decade ago, when we were contemplating expansion of our work to other parts of India that has poor coverage for eye care, this state was an obvious choice because of its geographic proximity to us, in addition to other factors. With the willingness of T P Das to lead this effort in his home state, support from the state government through allocation of land at a concessional price for setting up a Tertiary level centre in the capital city of Bhubaneswar, and a major grant from Operational Eye Sight of Canada, we went ahead with the creation of a tertiary eye care centre. We have now begun the process of expanding into rural areas and replicating our model for providing care to the neglected rural and urban slum populations. Three secondary centres are in various stages of development and during this month we have inaugurated the very FIRST vision centre in this state (this brought our score of vision centres to 109). All of these centres are supported by philanthropic support from organisations in India. This is a great beginning for a much needed programme.

Most eye researchers internationally aspire to present their work at the annual meeting of the ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH IN VISION AND OPHTHALMOLOGY (ARVO) in the US. Over 12000 researchers from all over the globe congregate each year and the best of eye research is presented. Our group always had an active participation in this meeting and 21 of our researchers presented their work at this year's meeting in Orlando, Florida. This participation allows for intense interaction with leading researchers in the world that further improves our research efforts in addition to fostering collaborations. Some among our group also hold leadership positions in this organisation.

Nurse's day was celebrated across our network on 12th May and indeed this group is pivotal for the quality of care and our dedicated team makes this possible at our Institute.

Retinopathy of Prematurity is a major cause of visual impairment in children in emerging economies. This can be controlled with early recognition and prompt care. Our colleague, Subhadra Jalali set up a model system of complete surveillance of all neonatal units in Hyderabad to accomplish this goal. This has helped in the creation of a state wide network and is being replicated in many other places. At the invitation of the World Health Organisation (WHO), she visited Manila, Philippines to help in the creation of this system there. Kudos to Subhadra for this work that demands utmost compassion and dedication, and for inspiring scores of other ophthalmologists to emulate her example.

Retinoblastoma is a form of eye cancer in Children and is more prevalent in India than anywhere else. Early diagnosis with prompt and appropriate therapy can save both vision and life. In India, lack of public awareness is a major barrier. "Retinoblastoma Awareness Week" was celebrated during the week of 11-18th of May. Our group has organized a public forum to draw attention to this eye problem. Greater awareness enhances the chances of minimizing the



devastating effects of this disease on sight and life. Our Institute has been at the forefront of providing services to this group of children making available all forms of therapy – Chemotherapy, Radiotherapy and surgery. For those where removal of eye is necessitated our Ocularist service provides custom made artificial eye that is aesthetically pleasing. This comprehensive approach is made available to ALL and more than half get even this complex and expensive care at no cost to them, like all other areas of our care across the Institute.

One of the recent additions to our clinical sub specialties is a “Dacryology service” focusing on disorders of tear passages. Javed Ali has become one of the few dedicated specialists in this area who just spent three months in Adelaide, Australia, furthering his expertise in this area. In the words of his mentor “Javed raised the bar of what is possible to do significantly”. Congratulations to Javed and my best wishes for his continued growth.

Leadership development is a focus area at the Institute now as strong leadership is critical to sustain our values and standards and strengthen them. Many of our colleagues are pursuing different learning systems and courses along this path. Our Director of Education, Prashant Garg, is actively pursuing this and spent a couple of weeks in the US combining attendance at a formal course with practical experience shadowing an experienced senior executive.

Back at the ranch, we have to continue to maintain sound financial health to keep all this activity moving and I am happy to report that the month of May recorded the highest ever patient care revenue even while maintaining our value of “EQUITY ” very strongly.

How a system like ours is making a difference is illustrated by the story of 2 year old Shafreena living in a remote rural area of Khammam district. Our field staff came to meet her mother who complained about a white spot in her daughter’s eye. Evaluation at our nearby vision centre and secondary centre confirmed the diagnosis of developmental cataract, and appropriate surgical procedure in our Hyderabad campus restored her sight. This case best exemplifies how an integrated multitier system benefits people very effectively. If this network of care didn't exist, the chances of Shafreena regaining her sight would have been negligible. I am happy to share this example of our values of “Patient First” and “Togetherness”.

Gullapalli N Rao