Dear Esteemed Members,

Wishing all members of VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India a fruitful new year.

Hope: the four letter word has a lot of strength in it. Hope is one word that keeps us working to achieve better to make the world a better place to live. So, in this New Year, let’s hope that we strive to achieve excellence in whatever field we are working in; to deliver better eye care to prevent avoidable blindness; restore sight and come closer to our aim of eliminating avoidable blindness.

Towards achieving a more comprehensive eye care, in this last quarter of the year, we held couple of very important workshops – one on Low Vision and the other in Glaucoma. Both conditions have very low awareness in our country and it is our sincere endeavour to see that it is highlighted. We are glad to share that both the workshops had high participation. We would like to thank all the faculty and resource persons who participated in these two workshops and made the workshops an enriching experience by sharing their very valuable inputs.

We would also like to thank HV Desai Eye Hospital for hosting the Low Vision workshop and Advanced Eye Centre, PGIMER, Chandigarh for being extremely proactive in hosting the national level meet on glaucoma.

This was also the quarter when the World Sight Day was observed. This year the national event was held at Bansara Eye Care Centre, Shillong. We would like to thank our northeast representative, Dr Jennifer for organising a grand event on the day. A platform for advocacy, the day was observed nationwide by all our members. We thank all our members for their united effort to generate awareness on the need to get eye tested regularly.

Continuing with our programme development, we conducted strategic planning workshops and peer reviewed quality assessment and hospital based skill transfer programme.

For 2014, plans are already afoot to holding a number of fruitful workshops, meetings to benefit our members. One of the most important events is the 10th annual conference. We would request all our members to actively participate in it.

We would also like to share with our members that CEO, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India, Dr GV Rao is moving on to a new organisation with newer responsibilities. It has been a very fruitful, constructive two years with him as the CEO and earlier as the President, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India. He has contributed significantly to take forward the objectives of VISION 2020 – India. We bid him farewell and wish him all the best in his new position.

We would like to share with our members that the process is on for selecting and appointing a new CEO and all the programmes will continue.

Best Regards

Col (retd) Dr M Deshpande
President
Universal Eye Health with call for action: Get your Eyes Tested was the theme for 2013’s World Sight Day (WSD). These simple words with a powerful action message were adapted in several innovative ways by VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India members and a large number of organisations across the country and the globe.

Keeping close to the call for action theme, screening was one of the main activity organised by a large number of our member organisations.

For a uniform message dissemination, in a kind of a first, a common poster both in Hindi and English was designed and shared in all members.

VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India Board along with Bansara Eye Care, Shillong, Meghalaya observed the World Sight Day (WSD) 2013 on October 10. The day long programme which commenced with a screening camp and concluded with a technical session was attended by some of the top government officials: right from the Governor of Meghalaya to the Joint Secretary, Health from the Centre, State Home Minister and State Health Minister: it was an immensely successful platform for advocating and sensitising the government on eye care.

The northeast region was chosen as the venue for the WSD as it is one region in the country where a huge gap on eye care delivery exists. And it has been VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India’s initiative to highlight the issues in the region to try and resolve them.

Inaugurating the WSD programme, the Chief Guest for the occasion, Governor of Meghalaya, Dr KK Paul suggested that the young population under the age group of 6 years who roughly constitute 20 per cent of the population in the State should be screened under the blindness control programme regularly.

Speaking on the occasion, the Guest of Honour for the WSD programme, Ms Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India campaigned for more focus on preventing childhood blindness, where 50 per cent blindness is avoidable. Speaking passionately on the subject she said, “We are a 30 year old programme (NPCB) and it will be totally criminal if any child has to go blind. Every child needs to be tested; any pre term baby needs to be tested for ROP. Today there is no excuse for any child to be blind.”

Convergence is the key word to attain our goal said Ms Krishnan urging all health programmes to converge to offer the best possible health care to the society.

Dr Bamin Tada, Advisor, Health, North Eastern Council, Government of India in his address emphasised on the need for health research where the gap is very wide. “Our neighbouring countries, he said “have overtaken us in this area.” Research and survey is a must.
He called out to the Professionals to get out of their comfort zones and reach out to the community.

The President of VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India, Dr Deshpande in his welcome speech said that health should be treated as a fundamental right. He said that cataract was an area where we have done well and also on refractive error, which is a simple problem. But now we have to focus on other problems also like Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) where the numbers were going high.

Dr GV Rao, CEO, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India, proposed a vote of thanks.

The daylong celebrations began with the flagging off of the screening camp by Ms Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and Smt Roshan Warjri, Honourable Home Minister, Government of Meghalaya. The WSD programme concluded with a technical session to bring focus on the gaps in eye care in the region.

Ms Sujaya Krishnan who inaugurated the session briefly spoke about the initiatives of NPCB in the region.

Dr Praveen Vashist, HOD, Community Ophthalmology Department, Dr RP Centre, Dr Harsha Bhattacharjee, Medical Director, Sri Sankara Deva Nethralaya, Guwahati, Dr Asim Sil, Chief Medical Director, NNN, West Bengal, Dr SK Goswami of Nalbari Eye Hospital, Dr Rajiv Basaiawmoit and Dr Santosh Moses made presentations at the technical session.

“We are a 30 year old programme (NPCB) and it will be totally criminal if any child has to go blind. Every child needs to be tested; any pre term baby needs to be tested for ROP. Today there is no excuse for any child to be blind.” Ms S Krishnan

Nation wide events at World Sight Day 2013

All our member organisations observed this day in their unique ways impacting a cross-section in the society among the general public.

Some of our members have shared their activities with us and we bring you a glimpse of the nationwide reach of this special day.

Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology, Kakinda, Andhra Pradesh

Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology had several events to mark the WSD. They placed E-Charts (vision charts) at selected govt & private schools, public places like markets, bus stands, railway stations and parks etc.; carried comprehensive eye investigation with specialty eye investigations package with super subsidized price and created public awareness through pamphlets, brochures, hoardings, print and electronic media.
World Sight Day 2013

Al Salama Eye Research Foundation, Perinthalmanna, Kerala conducted various programmes—right from general eye health clinics, exhibitions, painting competition and rally by optometrist to raise awareness on eye care.

Adv A Samsudeen and the Medical Director, Dr Muhammed Swadique delivered informative talks on the occasion.

Gomabai Nethralya, Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh

An out of the ordinary eye check up camp was conducted by Gomabai Nethralaya in one of the sub jails. The other screening camp was conducted in the district hospital premises for general public. 86 prisoners as well as jail staff and 58 at the district hospital were screened.

Gomabai Nethralya also conducted a painting completion with 15 children participating.

Arunodhya Deseret Eye Hospital

Arunodhya Deseret Eye Hospital (ADEH), Gurgaon observed the WSD in a variety of ways. Their events commenced from October 8 till 10th. They held an event at their hospital at Gurgaon where they blindfolded their guests of honour to make them aware about blindness, held screening camps in villages in and near Gurgaon and held an event at Medanta Hospital, Gurgaon where the chief guest was the well known cardiologist and Chairman of Medanta Hospital, Dr Naresh Trehan.

Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Eye Hospital, Dumka, Jharkhand a member of CBM organised a rally where about 70 staffs of NBJK blindfolded and they walked for about 2KMs in the town area. In a parallel event, an eye screen camp was organised at the hospital. A total of 166 persons were screened free of cost.
Two important thematic workshops towards a more comprehensive eye care was held in this quarter. One was on Low Vision and was held at HV Desai Eye Hospital, Pune and the other was on Glaucoma that was held at PG Hospital, Chandigarh.

A two day workshop on Low Vision was organised by VISION 2020: The Right to Sight - India at HV Desai Eye Hospital, Pune from 15th to 16th November, 2013. The aim of the workshop was to enhance the service delivery system for underserved population of Low Vision (LV) people.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- To raise awareness and orient on low vision care services among various stakeholders
- To share existing models and lesson learnt in LV service delivery
- To disseminate information’s on available resources (Appliances and equipment – provision and supply)
- To identify Operational Research on low vision care services

The workshop focused on the various aspects of low vision and the group work aimed to find out the challenges and strategies to strengthen low vision services in India.

The workshop had an encouraging response with 75 participants representing NGO’s, INGO’s and Government and twenty five Paramedic students.

The workshop was sponsored by CBM, SARO and hosted by H V Desai Eye Hospital, Pune.

Ms. Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India was the Chief Guest for the workshop.

Prof. Rajvardhan Azad, Chief, RP Center, AIIMS, New Delhi, Mr Nitin Desai, Corporate Advisor, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight - India and Mr NP Pandya, President, Poona Blinds Men’s Association were the guests of honour at the workshop.

The workshop commenced with a welcome address by Col. Dr. M Deshpande, President, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight - India. This was followed by presentations on the various clinical as well as rehabilitation aspects of low vision by the speakers and question answer sessions. Dr. Praveen Vashist, Additional Professor & Head of Community Ophthalmology Department, Dr RP Centre, AIIMS did the situational analysis on LV current situation and services.

Group work held during the workshop focused on: Challenges and Strategies to strengthen low vision services to identify the areas of improvement. As an outcome of the group work some of the main challenges were identified and strategies to overcome the challenges were suggested on various issues to improve the low vision services in the country. The group works were facilitated by Dr. Uday Gajiwala and Dr Sandeep Bhuttan.

As a final outcome of the workshop, a “National Working Committee on Low Vision” and “National Steering Committee on Low Vision” was formed to discuss the current status of low vision services in the country and strategies for improvement. The Committee has experts in low vision from different part of the country.
A national level meeting on glaucoma was organized by VISION 2020: The Right to Sight- India on 23 & 24 November 2013 at Advanced Eye Centre, PGIMER, Chandigarh, who hosted the workshop.

The aim of the workshop was to bring together all the agencies, organizations, professional bodies, institutions and individuals involved in glaucoma screening and treatment, to increase awareness of glaucoma, to identify priorities for control, and develop short and medium terms strategic plans.

The two-day workshop had an encouraging participation of 26 participants who made presentations and participated in group work spread over the two days. They discussed and deliberated to agree on strategies to be adopted (e.g. Early detection of Glaucoma; approaches to case detection/screening; treatment methods; R&D) and to develop a strategic plans for glaucoma for 3 to 5 years.

Delivering the welcome address at the inaugural session, Col (retd) Dr M Deshpande, President VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India thanked Prof Gupta for hosting the workshop at PGI. He further elaborated VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India’s objective of holding such thematic workshops: to focus on felt-needs to reduce the burden of low vision in India.

Dr Deshpande further added that NPCB provided a one-time solution by paying for cataract surgery, but diseases like glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy required lifelong follow-up and care. He expressed concern that the funds reaching various centres during the process of upgradation of facilities may not be utilized in the management of glaucoma patients.

For tackling the problem of glaucoma effectively, Dr Deshpande said there was a need to have glaucoma national awareness drive to increase awareness about this potentially irreversibly blinding condition and while there appeared to be a dilemma regarding the effectively of population screening for glaucoma, till date there was not even an agreement about what is the basic equipment required for glaucoma screening.

Dr GV Rao, CEO, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India introduced the meeting and hoped that at the end of the workshop there would be a roadmap to present to the government for an effective national plan to tackle the largely undiagnosed problem of glaucoma in the community.

Two main recommendations emerged from the deliberation at the workshop:

- To impress upon NPCB that in addition to avoidable blindness the focus should also now be on irreversible blindness due to glaucoma.
- Set up a small expert group to carry forward these recommendations to the Govt for inclusion as part of the NPCB
Other Highlights

The ‘Guidelines for Comprehensive Management of Low Vision in India’ developed by CBM and Sightsavers in collaboration with Lotus College of Optometry, Mumbai was released during the low vision workshop held at Pune. The manual has been published by VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India.

The manual has been authored by eight low vision experts from the country. The 111 pages book with 13 chapters aims to serve as a useful guide for any organisation wanting to set a low vision centre.

The manual was released in the presence of Ms. Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India; Dr. Rajvardan Azad, Chief, RP Centre AIIMS; Dr. Sara Varughese, Regional Director, CBM; Dr. Sandeep Buttan, Sightsavers, Mr N P Pandy, President, PBMA; s H V Desai Eye Hospital; Col (retd) Dr M Deshpande, Chief Medical Director, H V Desai Eye Hospital, Dr G V Rao, CEO, VISION 2020 India, Mr. Parvez Bilimoria ,Executive Director, PBMA's H V Desai Eye Hospital, Dr. Praveen Vashist, Additional Prof. & Head, RP Centre AIIMS and Dr Rahul Deshpande, Medical Director, HV Desai Eye Hospital.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

A two day strategic planning workshop was held at Medical College Mimer, Talegaon, Pune on 27 & 28 November 2013. This was the first such workshop at a medical college. Col (retd) Dr Deshpande and Dr GV Rao conducted the workshop.

HOSPITAL BASED SKILL TRANSFER PROGRAMME

A two day HBP for skill transfer on Occuloplasty was held at Sankar Foundation from 8 – 10 November, 2013. The volunteer faculty for the HBP was Dr. Rahul Deshpande, Medical Director, HV Desai Eye Hospital, Pune.

PEER REVIEWED QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Two peer reviewed quality assessment programmes were held in this quarter: one at Lotus Eye Hospital, Mumbai. Dr Usha Gopinathan, Executive Director, LVPEI; Col Deshpande and Dr GV Rao and participated in the exercise. The other was at Niramaya Charitable Trust, Gurgoan. Dr Usha Gopinathan, Executive Director, LVPEI, Dr GV Rao and Mr Mrinal Madhaw participated in the exercise.
Other Highlights

Participating in State ophthalmic meets

With a view to promote VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India among a wider audience, we participated in three state ophthalmic meets all held over the same dates: 18 – 20 October, 2013.

Col (Retd) Dr Deshpande and Mr Mahaveer Jain attended the Uttarakhand Ophthalmic meet held at Haridwar; Dr GV Rao attended the Madhya Pradesh Ophthalmic meet at Chitrakoot and Ms Sridevi Sunderarajan attended the Rajasthan Ophthalmic meet at Jaipur. At all the three meetings, presentations were made on the work being done by VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India.

Board Meeting

The 40th Board Meeting was held in conjunction with the World Sight Day at Bansara Eye Care Centre, Shillong, Meghalaya. The minutes of the meeting have been circulated.

COSI Annual Meeting

Mr Mahaveer Jain represented VISION 2020: The Right to Sight—India at the COSI annual meeting that held on 22 & 23 November. The meeting was held at Tejas Eye Hospital, Surat. At the meeting, Mr Mahaveer made a presentation about the activity of VISION 2020: The Right to Sight—India.

News you can use

Indigenous, purse friendly diabetic testing kit launched

Indigenous, purse friendly diabetic testing kit was launched by health ministry recently. They will be available in six months. The glucometers will now cost between Rs. 500 and 1,000 as against the price of Rs. 1,000-2,500 for the imported instrument. Each gluco strip will cost between Rs. 2 and Rs. 4, down from Rs. 18-35.


MSc Public Health for Eye Care course

The International Centre for Eye Health (ICEH) at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) is currently accepting applications for its annual MSc Public Health for Eye Care course. This course aims to provide eye health professionals with the public health knowledge and skills required to reduce blindness and visual disability in their setting. Early application is encouraged and we recommend applying by March 2014.