

generated by different studies and pilot projects.

## OPHTHALMIC INDUSTRY

The ophthalmic industry has evolved to truly make India self sufficient for most of its needs in equipment, medicines or surgical consumables. The products are available at rates affordable by the Indian economy. This has opened up the markets of the entire developing countries. India today enjoys the position of being the major supplier of ophthalmic medicines and surgical consumables to the developing countries.

## WHAT STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Having had an impressive track record in eye care, a lot more still needs to be done. The details of this are articulated in the eye care plan under the Eleventh Five year plan <sup>8</sup>.

## SERVICE FOCUS

Till now the eye care has been synonymous with Cataract and even in it there are issues. It is recognized that there are inequalities across the country with extremely low Cataract Surgical Rates in the North Eastern states, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Uttaranchal and Jammu & Kashmir. There are still issues in reaching the rural population, tribal areas and ensuring gender equity. These issues need to be addressed and under the current five-year plan India is aiming for a Cataract Surgical Rate (CSR – number of cataract surgeries per million people per year) of 8,000 (from the current national average of about 5,000) to address the blindness and visual impairment from cataract. Achieving this would make India as having one of the highest CSR in the world.

The current plan lays equal emphasis on non cataract conditions as well, covering simple yet neglected conditions like Refractive Error to more complex diseases of the Retina. This would be a major challenge in shifting the focus, perspective, attitude and practice of the eye care provider community from being cataract centric to becoming comprehensive provider of eye care services.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

While India has built a strong secondary eye care infrastructure, thanks to the cataract centric programme. However, the Primary Eye Care is almost nonexistent and this holds the key to universal coverage. A lot of headway has to be made in this direction to address various inequalities associated with gender, economy, literacy and geographic location. On the other end of the spectrum there is also a need for truly well developed tertiary centres which can provide comprehensive advanced care, provide training and engage in research. Though institutions exist in this category by way of teaching institutions and Regional Institutes of Ophthalmology, the competencies in many have to be developed significantly.

## HUMAN RESOURCE

The new goals and the intention to provide more comprehensive eye care with increased coverage requires significant changes and improvements to the status of Human Resources and training activities in the country<sup>9</sup>. It is increasingly recognized that one hand the quality of Ophthalmology residency training has to improve dramatically. It is equally recognized that the development of other eye care specific cadres such as the hospital based ophthalmic support personnel, community based eye care workers, Optometrists, Eye Care Managers, technicians etc, have to be given the importance it deserves. Today this group which really ought to be in the ratio of 6 to 7 per ophthalmologist is nonexistent as a formal work force. Today there are no national bodies to accredit the training for this cadre, stipulate standards, curriculum or in the certification process. A lot of work has to be done in this area and the government has an important role in making this happen.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, a strong foundation has been built for eye care. There is a strong commitment by all stakeholders – Government, International NGOs, voluntary eye hospitals, private practitioners, ophthalmic industry and the various associations. We have a sound plan and reasonable funding commitment. There is a strong alignment towards the plan and its goals. The big shift in the implementation would be towards quality in delivery, providing comprehensive eye care, ensuring universal coverage and building a strong base to develop all cadres of personnel in the eye care team.

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- **Update:** *Genetic lab: A necessity in Medical Colleges*
- **Health :** *Reproductive Health Education in Adolescent Girls*
- **Symposium :** *Medical Disorders and Pregnancy*