



Retinoblastoma Awareness Week

Aravind - Madurai, Coimbatore

Editorial

Aravind Eye Hospital's routine activities continue to be at the peak, focusing on patient care, awareness programmes and continuing medical education (CME) programmes. Recently, an awareness programme was organised at Sivakasi Government Hospital, highlighting the crucial role of healthcare professionals in promoting eye donation. World Retinoblastoma Awareness Week was observed in a meaningful manner at Aravind. Retinoblastoma is a rare and rapidly growing eye cancer that primarily affects infants and young children, often leading to removal of the eye. In severe cases, it can be fatal. Raising awareness about this condition is vital to protect the eyesight and lives of children. Hence, during the awareness week, Aravind Eye Hospitals organised a Survivors' meet in Madurai and Coimbatore, focusing on educating individuals about the genetic causes of retinoblastoma, the importance of early detection, and the available treatment options. Furthermore, during the Annual Meeting of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology 2023 held in New Orleans, US, senior scientists and research students from Aravind Medical Research Foundation (AMRF) visited various laboratories, enriching their expertise and getting updated on the recent trends in eye research. This issue features updates on these and numerous other topics.

Aravind Events

Internal Capacity Building

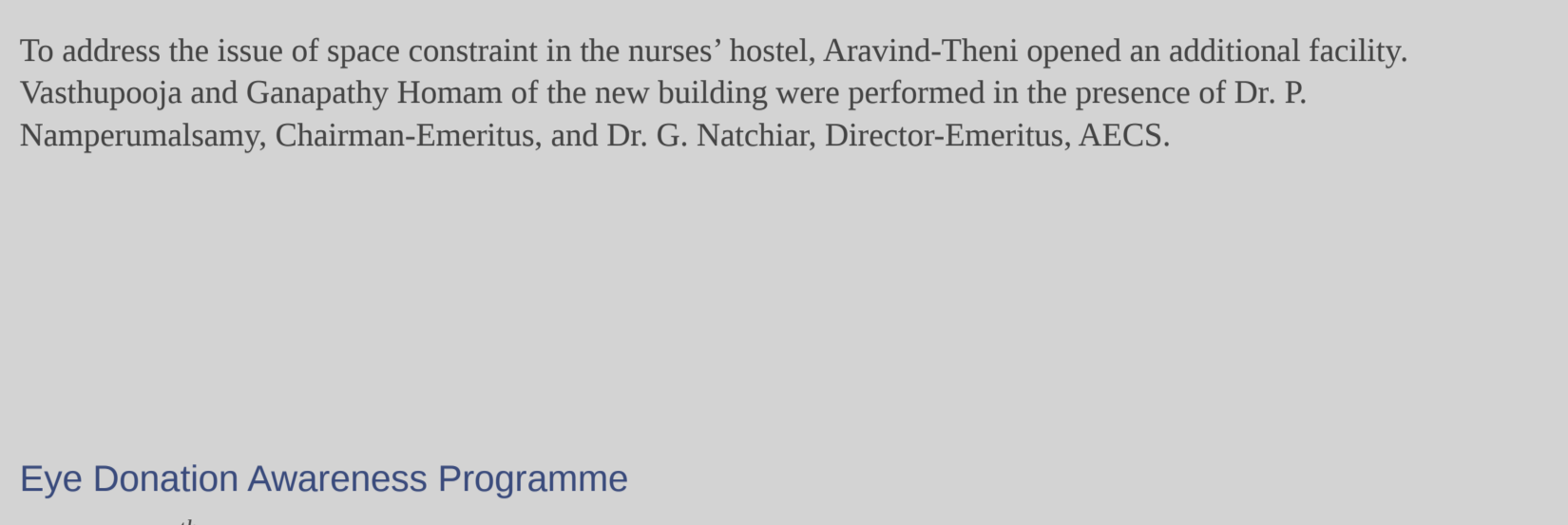
Vellore, 9th June

R. Devi, Data Coordinator, Department of Biostatistics, attended the REDCap software database development and management workshop organised by the Biostatistics Department of CMC, Vellore.

CME - 'DCR - From Inside and Outside'

Aravind-Madurai, 3rd June

Orbit and Oculoplasty Services, Aravind-Madurai organised a one day CME for all Aravind centres. This CME on Dacryocystorhinostomy (DCR) focus was on the anatomy, complications and management of lacrimal system disorders. Dr. R. Kim, Chief Medical Officer, Aravind-Madurai welcomed the participants, and Dr. R.D. Ravindran, Chairman, Aravind Eye Care System (AECS), delivered the inaugural address. Dr. R. Usha Kim, Chief, Orbit and Oculoplasty Services, Aravind-Madurai, the organising secretary, provided an introduction and overview of the CME. Dr. Dewyoti Tripathy, Consultant, Ophthalmic Plastic Surgery, Orbit and Ocular Oncology, LV Prasad Eye Institute, Bhubaneswar and an alumnus of Aravind, participated as a guest faculty and shared his vast experiences in the field. A total of 60 participants, comprising of Orbit fellows and postgraduates attended the programme.



Opening of an Additional Hostel

Aravind-Theni, 3rd June

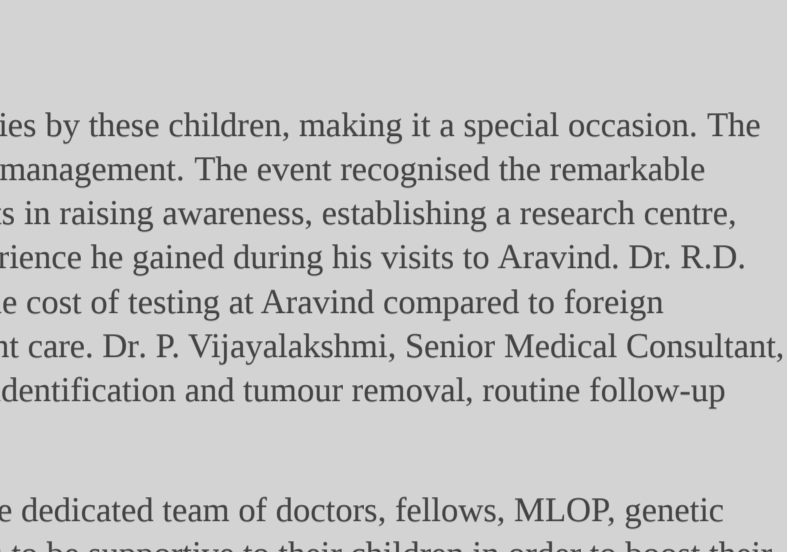
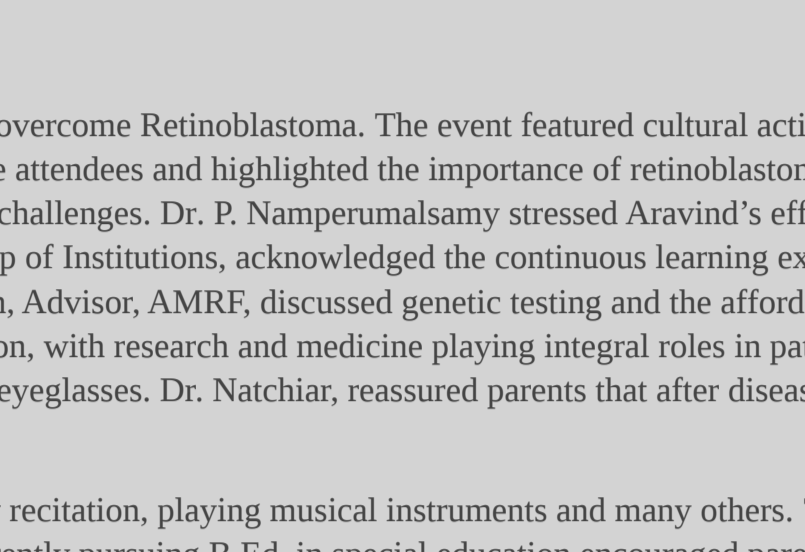
To address the issue of space constraint in the nurses' hostel, Aravind-Theni opened an additional facility. Vashupoo and Ganapathy Hemam of the new building were performed in the presence of Dr. P. Nampumalasingam, Chairman-Emeritus, and Dr. G. Nachiar, Director-Emeritus, AECS.



Eye Donation Awareness Programme

Sivakasi, 30th May

Rotary Aravind International Eye Bank (RAIEB), Aravind-Madurai organised the programme at the Government Hospital, Sivakasi. Dr. Saravanan, Manager, RAIEB spoke about the importance of eye donation and the hospital's cornea retrieval programme. He also emphasised the crucial role of health care professionals in the cornea retrieval programme. A total of 40 participants, including doctors and nurses attended.



Survivors' Meet during World Retinoblastoma Awareness Week

Aravind-Madurai/Coimbatore, 20th May

During Retinoblastoma Awareness Week, Aravind-Madurai organised the annual survivors' meet for children who have overcome Retinoblastoma. The event featured cultural activities by these children, making it a special occasion. The programme was attended by 150 children with their parents and siblings. Dr. Usha Kim extended a warm welcome to the attendees and highlighted the importance of retinoblastoma management. The event recognised the remarkable achievements of some of these children who have cleared board exams and have excelled in various fields, despite their challenges. Dr. P. Nampumalasingam stressed Aravind's efforts in raising awareness, establishing a research centre, and providing rehabilitation activities to fight against the disease. M.V. Muthuramalingam, Chairman of Velammal Group of Institutions, acknowledged the continuous learning experience he gained during his visits to Aravind. Dr. R.D. Ravindran shared a patient's success story regarding retinoblastoma genetic testing at Aravind. Dr. V.R. Muthukannuppan, Advisor, AMRF, discussed genetic testing and the affordable cost of testing at Aravind compared to foreign countries. Dr. A. Dharmalingam, Director-Research, AMRF, highlighted Aravind's dual focus on treatment and prevention, with research and medicine playing integral roles in patient care. Dr. P. Vijayalakshmi, Senior Medical Consultant, Pediatric Ophthalmology, Aravind-Madurai, spoke about the children's experience when they were able to see through eyeglasses. Dr. Nachiar, reassured parents that after disease identification and tumour removal, routine follow-up visits further issues.

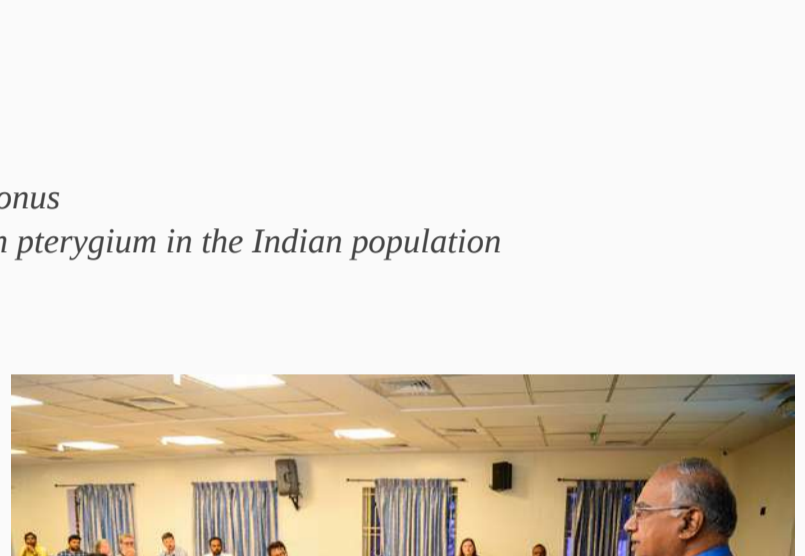
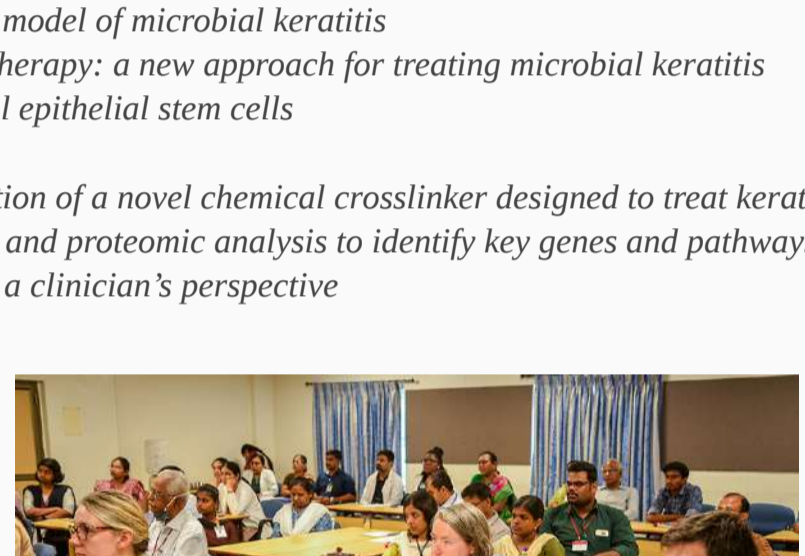
The event featured video clips showcasing the talents of the retinoblastoma survivors, including dancing, singing, poetry recitation, playing musical instruments and many others. The dedicated team of doctors, fellows, MLOP, genetic testing team, and research students were introduced to the audience. Jayanthi, a 21-year-old retinoblastoma survivor currently pursuing B.Ed. in special education encouraged parents to be supportive to their children in order to boost their confidence. Survivors and their family were provided sumptuous food, and children were given attractive gifts.



Aravind-Madurai Aravind-Madurai Aravind-Madurai Aravind-Madurai

Aravind-Coimbatore organised a special event during the 8th year of World Retinoblastoma Awareness Week, inviting retinoblastoma patients and their families. The event saw a magical turnout, with a total of 117 retinoblastoma survivors along with their parents and siblings. All of them underwent comprehensive eye examinations. The programme commenced with a warm welcome address by R. Umashriya, HR-Manager, Aravind-Coimbatore. Dr. Prema, Medical Consultant, Aravind-Coimbatore provided a detailed explanation about the different categories and stages of retinoblastoma, as well as the treatment options. Dr. Pradeep Kumar, Geneticist, Kovai Medical Centre and Hospital, spoke about the importance of genetic tests, led by Dr. Kavitha Yuvrajam, Medical Consultant, Aravind-Coimbatore, elaborated on the process of computerized prosthetic fitting. Dr. Saravana Kumar, Anaesthetist, Aravind-Coimbatore gave an insightful talk on inhalation anaesthesia and addressed patients' queries. Rajakumari, Counsellor, delivered the vote of thanks. Children who attended the event received hot pack lunch boxes, building blocks, umbrellas, smileys, and balloons. Wind and Traver entertained the children with games, songs and dances. This was followed by a magic show.

An interactive session was arranged for parents, providing them an opportunity to share their experiences and connect with one another. Parents showcased their talents through various performances such as dance, playing keyboard, Silambattam, monact, and more. Two patients, one working in the medical field and the other in IT, delivered motivating speeches that uplifted the spirits of everyone present there. One of them said, "Self motivate yourself, remember that your parents are your strongest support, if anyone criticises your disability, it's because they are jealous of your growth. You are superior to them, so don't get depressed". They encouraged others not to get disheartened by any criticism regarding their disabilities. The atmosphere was filled with positivity and liveliness as patients interacted with each other, leaving with a renewed sense of positivity. A delicious lunch was served after the formal programme.



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AMRF - UoE Cornea Research Conference

Madurai, 14-15 June

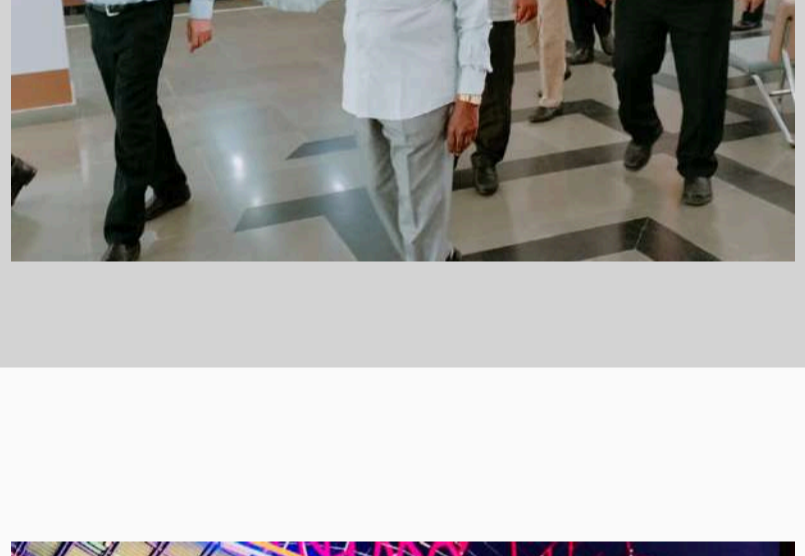
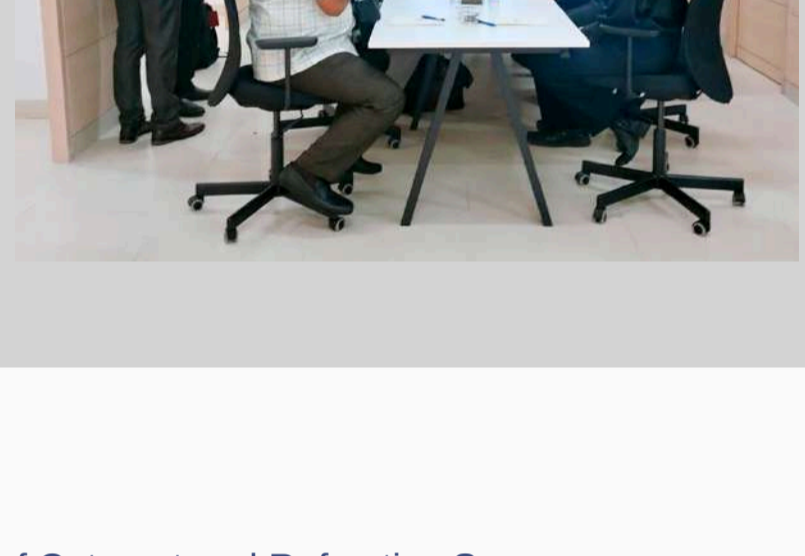
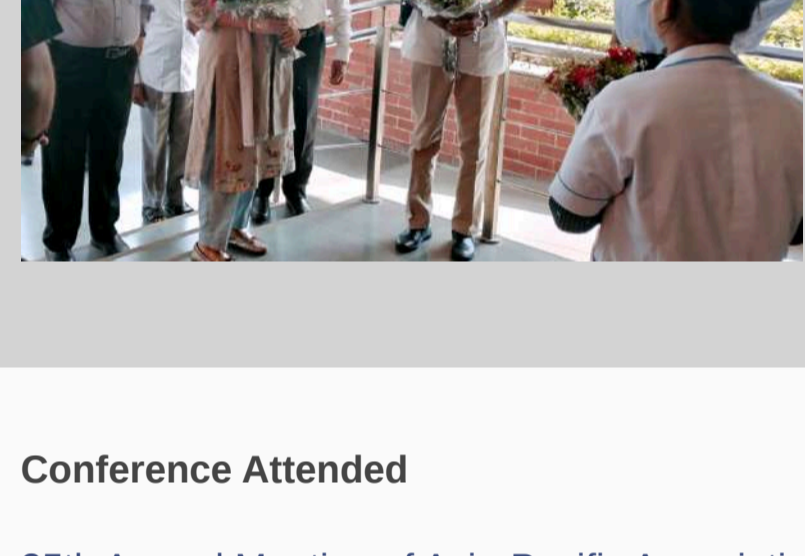
AMRF conducted a two-day Cornea Research Conference in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh (UoE). This conference was initiated through the interaction between Dr. N. Venkatesh Prajna, Chief, Cornea & Refractive Surgery Services, Aravind-Madurai, Prof. Kev Dhalwadi and Dr. Beth Mills, Centre for Inflammation Research, Institute for Regeneration and Repair, the University of Edinburgh, UK. The conference was led by Prof. K. Dharmalingam, and coordinated by Dr. D. Bharanidharan, Scientist-Microbiology and Bioinformatics, AMRF. During the conference, researchers from UoE introduced a new technology called "FluoroP" aimed at establishing and developing a cost-effective device for diagnosing the causative microbe responsible for corneal infections. Further, clinicians, scientists, and research scholars engaged in brainstorming the current challenges and solutions in microbial keratitis. Dr. Bharanidharan also provided an overview of the core research facilities and ongoing research projects of AMRF. Sharing of the research activities between the two institutions served as a remarkable initiative, laying foundation for ongoing and future collaborative projects, as well as fostering long-term associations between them.

A total of 14 papers were presented by UoE, AEH and AMRF team over the course of two days, covering various aspects of corneal research. Additionally, 16 posters were presented.

- Haritharan B's poster titled *Isolation and characterisation of the extracellular vesicles from Aspergillus flavus clinical isolate* received the Favourite Poster Award.

Below is the list of presented papers:

- Prof. K. Dharmalingam - *Comparative proteomics of corneal surface proteome and early exoproteome of A.flavus and A.fumigatus*
- Dr. Lalitha Prajna - *Microbial keratitis - current clinical diagnostics, pitfalls, and wish-list*
- Dr. N. Venkatesh Prajna - *Microbial keratitis - current treatments, patient prognosis and state of the art (trials)*
- Dr. Stuart Dickson - *Seeing is believing: Microscopic molecular imaging. The distal lung as a window to the eye*
- Dr. Syam Mohan B. De. Kay Russell - *Development and evaluation of FluoroP: a rapid microscope for microbial keratitis diagnosis with SmartProbes*
- Dr. Beth Mills - *AspLFD: point of care diagnosis of Aspergillus causing fungal keratitis*
- Dr. N. Siddharth - *Development and clinical evaluation of A CRISPR/Cas2a based diagnostic platform for ocular fungal infections*
- Dr. Leonie Fingthit - *Approaches to 3D cell culture model of microbial keratitis*
- Dr. Sireelagh Dhanant - *Antimicrobial photodynamic therapy: a new approach for treating microbial keratitis*
- Dr. Gowri Priya C. - *MIRNAs regulating human limbal epithelial stem cells*
- D. Bharanidharan - *MIRNAs role in fungal keratitis*
- Dr. O.G. Ramprasad - *Exploring the mechanism of action of a novel chemical crosslinker designed to treat keratoconus*
- Dr. Dilipjayan Banerjee - *Comparative transcriptomic and proteomic analysis to identify key genes and pathways in pyroglutamine in the Indian population*
- Dr. Anubha Patilak - *Proteomics in fungal keratitis - a clinician's perspective*



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LAICO

30th On-site Ophthalmic Instrument Maintenance Course

Rwanda, 22-26 May

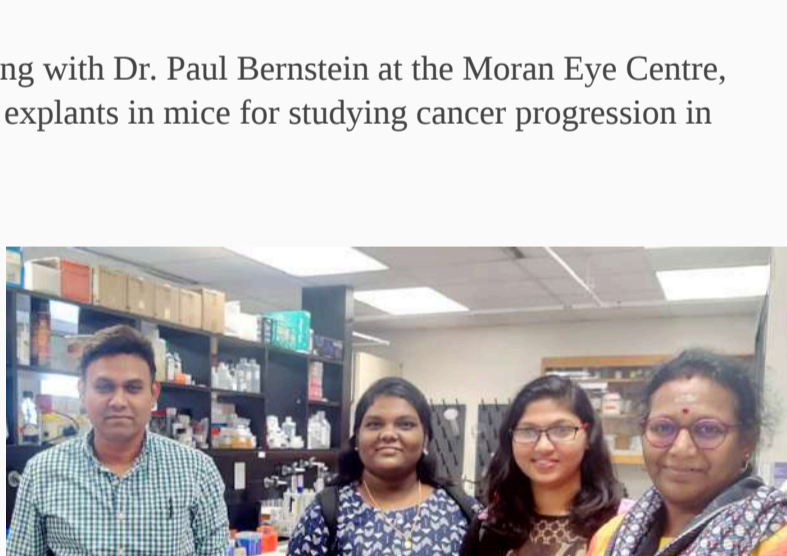
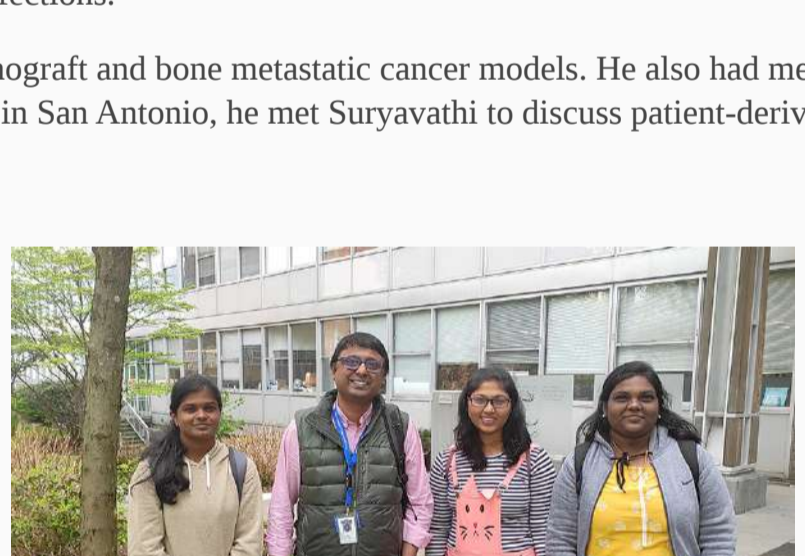
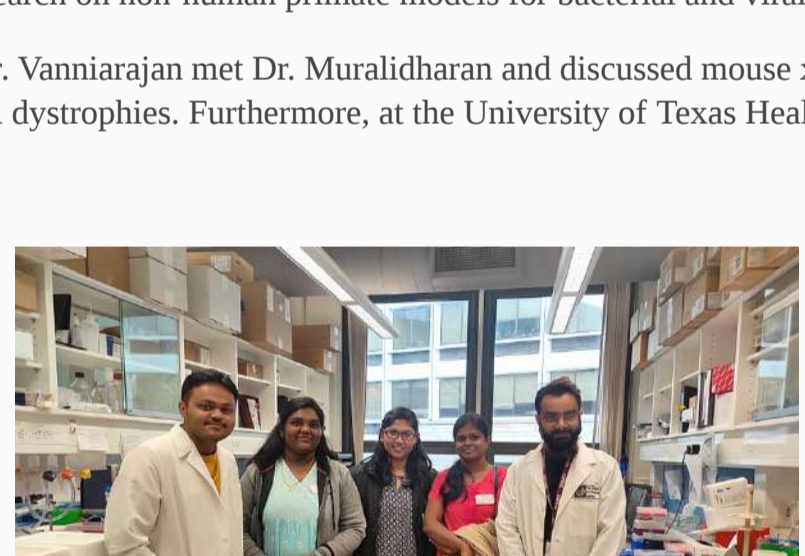
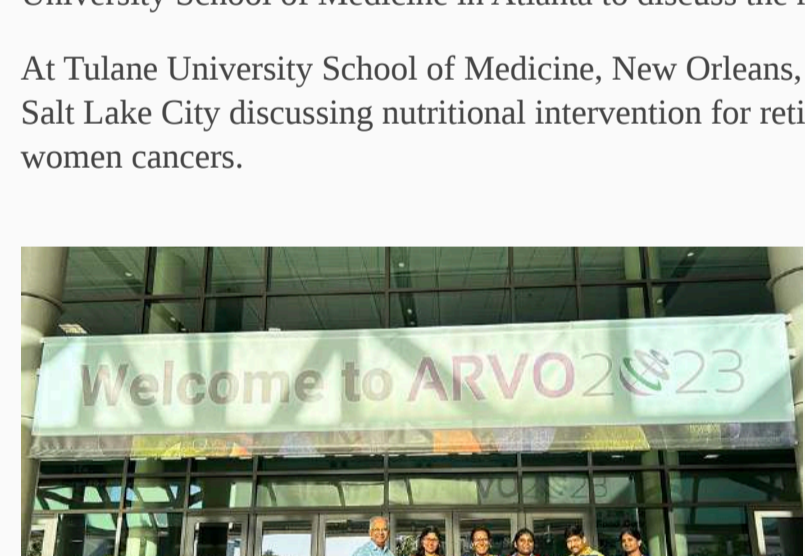
Prof. N. Manickam, Consultant and N. Kasihari and S. Meenakshi, Bio Medical Engineers, Instruments and Equipment Maintenance Department, Aravind-Madurai, were the resource persons for the on-site equipment organised by The Fred Hollows Foundation, Rwanda. A total of 17 Biomedical Technicians from various Government General Hospitals in Rwanda, selected by the Health ministry of Rwanda, attended the programme. The five-day course included discussions and demonstrations on the basic equipment used in eye clinics, such as Direct Ophthalmoscope (DO), Sreak Retinoscope, Indirect Ophthalmoscope (IO) and Slit Lamp. These instruments were dismantled and reassembled in front of the trainees. The trainees brought 21 different non-working instruments including: Sreak, DO, Auto-refractometer, Non-Contact Tonometer, Labyrinthometer, Autocline, Slit Lamp, Lensometer (Manual and Auto), A B Scan and Keratometer. Most of the equipment was successfully repaired and some were made functional by simple replacement of parts.



Needs Assessment Visit to Indira Gandhi Eye Hospital & Research Centre

Gurgaon, Haryana, 29-31 May

Thulasiraj Ravilla, Director-Operations, AECS, Dr. Madhu Bhadran, Director, Regional Institute of Ophthalmology Eye Hospital Slapur, Dr. Thiruvengalokrishnan, Chief, Cornea & Refractive Surgery Services, Aravind-Chennai, R. Meenakshi Sundaram, Senior Manager, Clinical Services, Aravind-Madurai and R. Suresh Kumar, Senior Faculty, LAICO conducted the needs assessment visit to IGEH in Gurgaon, India's corporate hub. The objective of the visit was to assess the current performance and quality of IGEH, identify areas for improvement, suggest remedial measures, and guide the hospital in becoming a centre of excellence.



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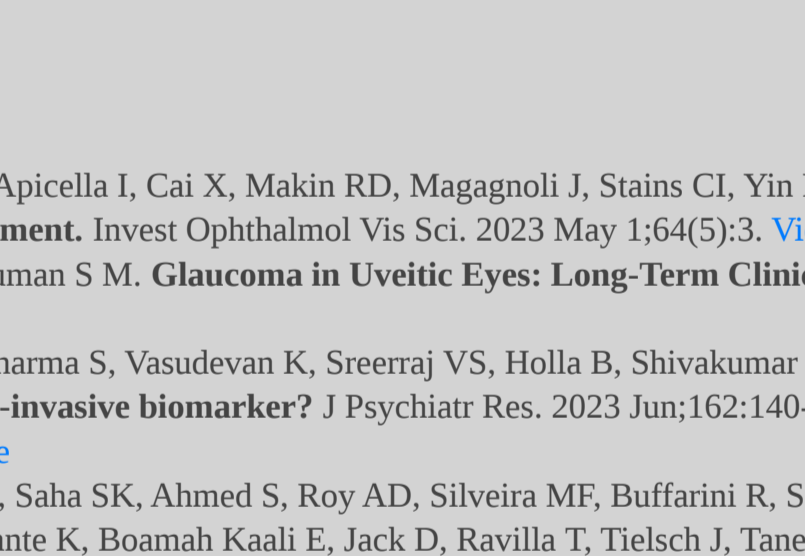
Conference Attended

35th Annual Meeting of Asia-Pacific Association of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons (APACRS)

Singapore, 8-10 June

Dr. N. Venkatesh Prajna, Chief, Cornea & Refractive Surgery Services, Aravind-Madurai

Topic: Update on fungal keratitis - Newer trends in diagnosis



Annual Meeting of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology 2023

New Orleans, US, 23-27 April

Prof. Dr. K. Dharmalingam

Title: Defining the host response to ocular pathogens using transcriptomics and proteomics (Paper presentation)

Dr. Gowri Priya Chidambaramathan

Title: Decline in the function of adult human retinal pigment epithelial stem cells with ageing (Paper presentation)

P. Saranya

Title: Decline in the adult human lens epithelial stem cell function with ageing and in cataract (Paper presentation)

K. Saraswathi

Title: Genomic and transcriptomic profiling identifies aberrant signalling pathways in ocular B cell lymphoma (Paper presentation)

Dr. A. Vanniarajan

Title: Distinct epigenomic alterations in retinoblastoma (Poster presentation)

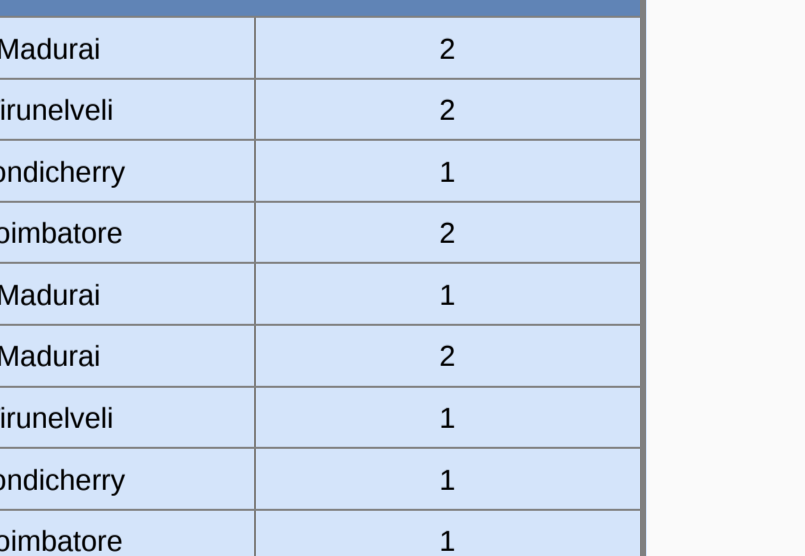
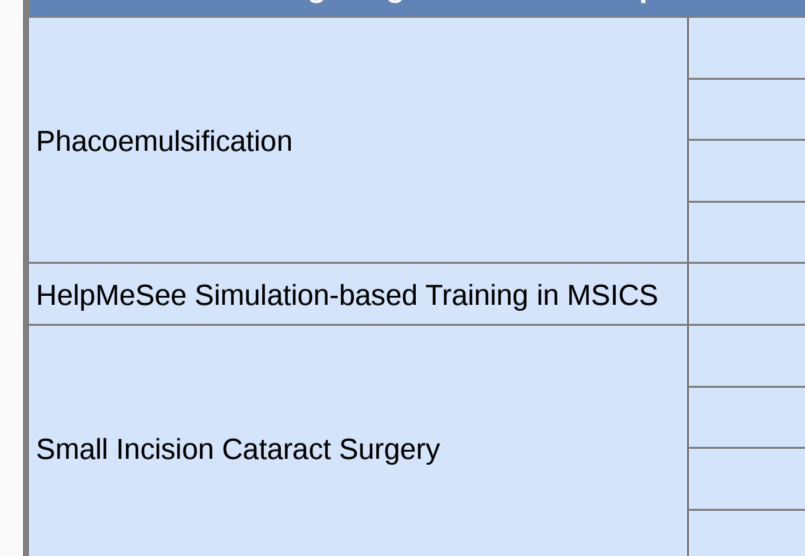
R. Iswarya

Title: Human tubular meshwork stem cells derived exosomes enhanced wound healing and antioxidant property: an attempt towards a cell-free therapy for glaucoma (Poster presentation)

During the visit to US, the research students had the opportunity to visit various renowned institutions and interact with experts in their respective fields. At Tulane University, New Orleans, they visited the Structural and Cellular Biology Laboratory and interacted with Dr. Muralidharan Anbalagan, who is working on metastasis in cancer models. Dr. Anbalagan's expertise includes working with animal models, xenografting, imaging techniques and various molecular techniques. The team also visited Albert Einstein School of Medicine, New York, where they interacted with Dr. Satish Nandakumar, who is working on hematopoietic stem cells- CRISPR/Cas9 mediated Stem Cell Editing to study the mechanism of blood cancer predisposition. Additionally, they visited Dr. Jankanan Lali and other general lab facilities at Schepens Eye Research Institute, Boston, where they observed instrumentation facilities such as autocentrifuge, Mass spectrometry, Live cell imaging system, learned mice eye dissection from them and had discussions with Dr. Joseph Ciolino who is working on exosomes from various cells and cell lines.

Dr. Vanniarajan had meetings with experts during his visit. He met with Dr. Lieberman at Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta to discuss structural alterations of the mutant proteins especially myosin. He also had discussions with Dr. Srinivasan, at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, in Atlanta focusing on developing methods for microbial detection, especially Streptococcus Pneumoniae. Additionally, he held a meeting with Dr. Vijayakumar, at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta to discuss the research on non-human primate models for bacterial and viral infections.

At Tulane University School of Medicine, New Orleans, Dr. Vanniarajan met Dr. Muralidharan and discussed mouse xenograft and bone metastatic cancer models. He also had meeting with Dr. Paul Bernstein at the Moran Eye Centre, Salt Lake City discussing nutritional intervention for retinal diseases. Furthermore, at the University of Texas Health in San Antonio, he met Suryavathi to discuss patient-derived explants in mice for studying cancer progression in women cancers.



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Training

Enrolments for June 2023			
Course title	Training Centre	No. of enrolments	
Long Term Fellowship Programmes - For Ophthalmologists			
Fellowship in Anterior Segment / Intraocular Lens Surgery	Chennai	1	
Fellowship in Glaucoma	Chennai	1	
Fellowship in Cornea	Chennai	1	
Fellowship in Medical Retina	Chennai	2	
Fellowship in Retina and Vitreous	Chennai	2	
Fellowship in General Ophthalmology	Chennai	1	
Short Term Training Programmes - For Ophthalmologists			
Phacoemulsification	Madurai	2	
	Trivellore	1	
	Coimbatore	2	
HelpMeSee Simulation-based Training in MSICS	Madurai	1	
	Madurai	2	
Small Incision Cataract Surgery	Pondicherry	1	
	Pondicherry	1	
	Coimbatore	1	
Short Term Training Program - For Paramedicals			
Fundus Fluorescein Angiography & Ultrasonography	Madurai	1	
Instrument Maintenance - For Technicians			
Online Course on Ophthalmic Instruments Maintenance - Part I	Shaco	2	
Management Courses			
Community Outreach and Social Marketing of Eye Care Services	LAICO	16	

Statistics

Patient Statistics - May 2023															
Hospitals	Total	Madurai	Trivellore	Theni	Coimbatore	Pondicherry	Trupur	Dindigul	Salem	Tuticorin	Udumalpet	CbeCC	Chennai	Trupali	Kovilpatti
Hospital Out-patient visits															