



EYE 2 EYE

March 2013, Volume 16, Issue 1

GIVE THE GIFT OF VISION

MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN, SEF

Dear Friends,

Warm greetings from San Jose.

Thanks to your support and encouragement, the year 2012 has been the best year for SEF so far. Our anonymous donor donated \$1.5M for the Kanpur hospital construction and an additional \$1M to buy land in states like Rajasthan for our future eye hospitals. With that, our 2012 revenue crossed \$6M! We need to exceed this number in 2013 to keep up the pace towards Vision 20/20 by the year 2020 and we are confident that it can be done with your active participation.

We are also very happy to inform you that we performed our one millionth free eye surgery at our Coimbatore Eye Hospital in March 2013 and will perform several million free eye surgeries in the years to come and play a major role in eradicating curable blindness. Our Shimoga Hospital got the NBE (National Board of Examinations) approval for two primary and two post diploma seats in Ophthalmology.

The Board of Sankara Eye Care Institutions (India), SEF (USA) and Mission For Vision (UK) met at our headquarters in Coimbatore for three days. We looked at the next ten years and thoroughly analyzed the requirements including financials, personnel and other resources, self-sufficiency etc., and felt confident that the goal is within our reach. We need to scale up our operations both in India and the US. Our hospitals are world class, are run very well, provide excellent loving care to visually handicapped poor people and the results are evident. We should surely be able to get a much higher level of support from institutions and others to complete a minimum of 20 hospitals all over India by the year 2020.

I also visited our hospitals in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu during this India trip. Our volunteer Raghu Gandadi and I went from Bangalore to Shimoga by taxi and it was a wonderful trip. This was my second trip to Shimoga and the first one was for the inauguration in 2008. Our

agriculturist planted several trees at the hospital in 2008 and they all have grown big and the whole area looks so beautiful. Right across the road is the Tunga river and the whole atmosphere is like an ashram where our brothers and sisters are given loving care by our staff. Raghu and I had an opportunity to serve fruits to our patients after their lunch and the patients would not let go of our hands. I was moved by this experience and thanked God for this great opportunity. This is when I felt that all our efforts in the US to raise funds to help them are worth it.

We spoke to our Shimoga hospital staff and motivated them to strive hard to attain self-sufficiency this year and they can do it. We also visited our Bangalore hospital and spoke to our staff and met our patients. Later in the week, I went by train from Chennai to Guntur, stayed at our hospital for a day, and met our patients and staff. Guntur is our best performing hospital and they have received the "Performance Excellence Award" twice in a row and they are hoping for a hat-trick this year. I also visited our city hospital in Vijayawada and our Coimbatore base and city hospitals. I see the same wonderful, loving Sankara culture at all our hospitals. The hospitals are extremely clean and tidy and our staff members know that they are part of a movement to eradicate curable blindness.

I have come back to the US with a lot more enthusiasm and commitment to do our best for our blind poor. The Kanpur hospital construction is about to start anytime now and we are close to acquiring land in Jodhpur, Rajasthan for our next hospital. Guntur hospital is growing out of seams and is ready for a major expansion. Please become a founding donor of any of these hospitals and consider supporting "Open an Eye a Month" at any of our hospitals.

Jyot se jyot jalate chalo, prem ki Ganga bahate chalo.

K. M. L. J.



SANKARA SETS A NEW RECORD: ONE MILLION FREE SURGERIES!

"Where there is a will, there is a way." Time and again, the dedicated staff and volunteers at Sankara have proved this adage right. This time around, they have scaled greater heights, completing one million free eye surgeries on March 4, 2013!

The road so far has been paved with challenges - roadblocks that have only strengthened our resolve and inspired us to forge ahead in our mission. From a total of 25,000 free surgeries until 1998 we have grown rapidly to a million today. Expanding our outreach, we have scaled up from a single hospital (in 1998) to nine state-of-the-art hospitals across India and extended our services through preventive programs and screenings across all age groups. This has resulted in an exponential increase in the number of free surgeries provided annually, from 8000 per year in 1998 to 140,000 per year in 2012.



Shanthi, before her surgery at Sankara

For thirty-five-year old Shanti and her family however, this is more than a landmark statistic. For the illiterate weaver who supports her four children and physically challenged husband with a meager income, it is a fresh lease of life. Having been diagnosed with cataract in

Our Track Record

One million free eye surgeries (March 2013)

140,000 free surgeries per year in 2012

Nine state-of-the-art hospitals

her right eye at a Sankara Eye Camp, she was successfully operated on a few months ago at the Sankara base hospital in Coimbatore.

But she soon returned, after developing cataract in her left eye as well, which was operated by Sankara's consultant surgeon Dr Prabhu Shankar on March 4, 2013. The operation was Sankara's millionth free eye surgery, marking a new high in our journey to eradicate curable blindness.



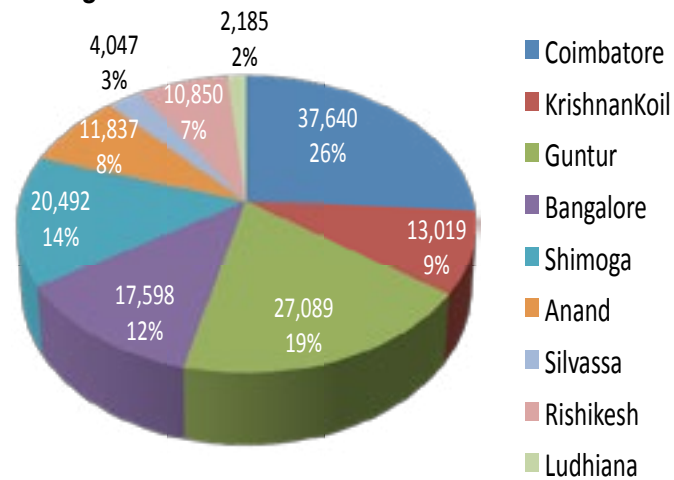
Shanthi, after a successful surgery

Shanthi shares her experience and says, "When it is hard to find care and love amongst family and friends, Sankara has given me all that and much more, in fact, a bright future for me and my family". This sentiment, echoed by many more patients, makes it all the more gratifying for everyone at Sankara, transcending our mission for vision to a journey beyond wins and statistics, and inspiring us to reach out to many more in need of a helping hand.

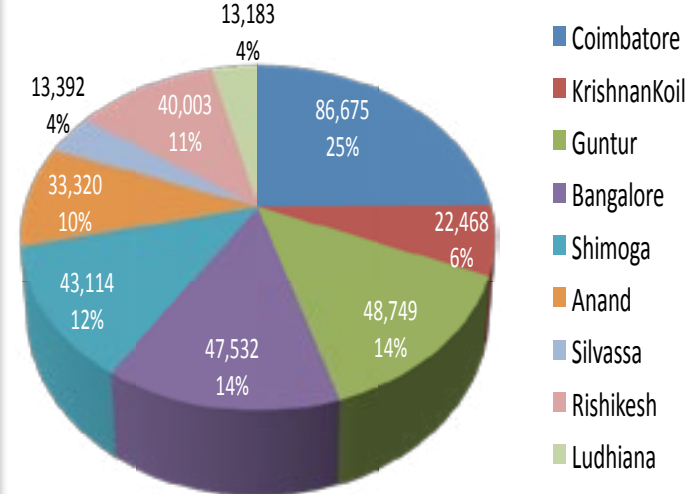
Going forward, we intend to eradicate curable blindness in India by the year 2020 - by establishing 20 such hospitals that provide cutting-edge eye care services for most regions of rural India and conducting a million free surgeries every year.

SURGERY STATISTICS FOR 2012

Free Surgeries

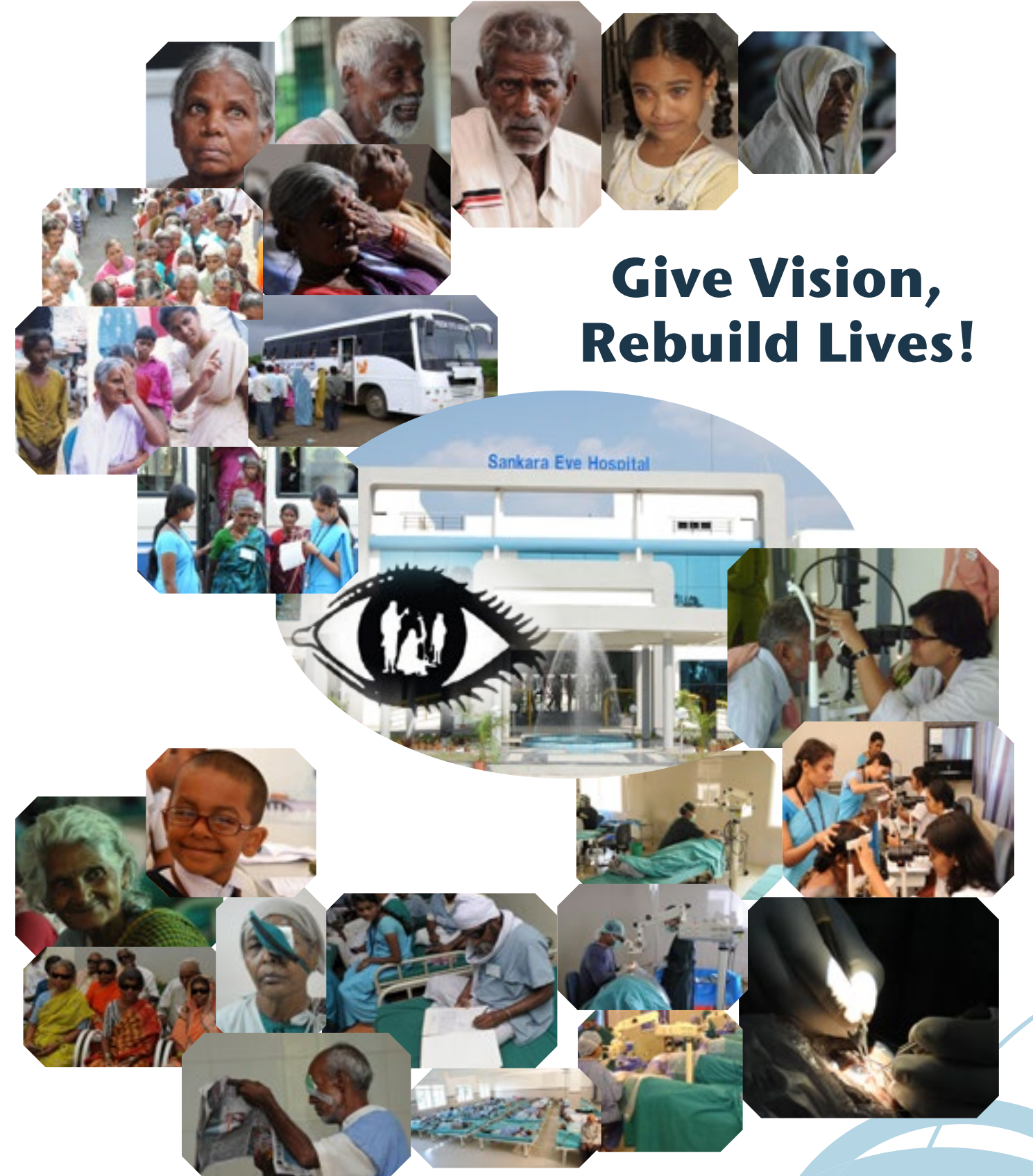


Patients Screened



* Statistics indicated as of December 2012

A MILLION EYES - A JOURNEY FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE...



SEF RECEIVES COVETED 4-STAR RATING

Sankara Eye Foundation, USA has been awarded Charity Navigator's coveted 4-star rating for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency. Approximately only a quarter of the charities evaluated by Charity Navigator, a leading charity evaluator in America, have received their highest rating - four out of four stars.



In a letter to SEF, USA, the rating agency also indicated that "SEF, USA outperforms most other charities in America and that this "exceptional" designation from Charity Navigator differentiates SEF, USA from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust". A review of SEF, USA's fiscal health and commitment to accountability and transparency will be visible on Charity Navigator's website.

CELEBRATING REPUBLIC DAY WITH A BRAILLE FLAG

Think National Pride.... Think National Flag.... The 12 million blind people of our country are deprived of this symbol of national pride. To make the Indian National Flag accessible to the blind, India's first tactile flag, an initiative of Sankara Eye Hospital, was unveiled by the Governor of Karnataka, His Excellency Shri. H. R. Bharadwaj, at Rajbhavan, Bangalore on November 15, 2012. Worldwide, only the United States of America and United Kingdom have national flags that are accessible to the blind.



The braille flag, conceptualized and created by Sankara Eye Hospital, in association with Sightsavers, allows the blind to "see" the national flag through touch. The tricolors of the flag are depicted through different textures that enable one to appreciate the different colors. A raised chakra at the centre of the flag allows the blind to feel the Ashoka Chakra with its 24 spokes. The colors and features of the flag are explained in Braille alongside the flag. The blind children present at the event could, for the first time, "see" the tricolor.



Dr. R. V. Ramani, Founder and Managing Trustee, Sankara Eye Care Institutions India said, "It is unfortunate that something as important as the National Flag is inaccessible to the blind. We believe that the blind should get equal access to rights and services as their sighted counterparts. This tactile flag is a step towards this."

The governor also inaugurated a unique exhibition "Through Different Eyes". The exhibition, organized by Sightsavers in partnership with Sankara Eye Hospital, is aimed at spreading the message that blindness is preventable. The exhibition showcased photographs taken by 14 visually impaired children whose vision has been restored with the efforts of Sightsavers and Sankara. These children were introduced to the nuances of digital photography in workshops conducted last year.

SANKARA OFFERS "DIPLOMATE OF NATIONAL BOARD" DEGREE FOR PROFESSIONALS

Due to the rapid growth in population, the country needs educated and trained professionals who are well-versed in current technologies and best practices to meet the increasing demands in eyecare services.

In its efforts to address this need, the National Board of Examinations (NBE) aims to create quality medical professionals and to monitor, and certify their training through accredited institutions. The NBE issues a "Diplomate of National Board (DNB)" degree, which is equivalent to Post-Graduate and Post-Doctorate degrees awarded by other Indian Universities approved by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. The NBE grants accreditation for DNB Ophthalmology (broad Specialty Training) and Fellowships (sub-specialty Training) in Pediatric Ophthalmology and Retina-Vitreous Courses.

Sankara Eye Centre, Coimbatore (Tamilnadu) has an excellent 16-year-long track record as an NBE Accredited Institution. We have four primary and four post-diploma seats in our Coimbatore Unit. Sankara Eye Hospital, Guntur (Andhra Pradesh) received NBE Accreditation 3 years ago, with two primary and two post-diploma seats, where as Sankara Eye Hospital, Shimoga (Karnataka) got approval this year with two primary and two post-diploma seats from NBE. We are currently in the process of getting NBE accreditation for Sankara Eye Hospital, Bangalore (Karnataka).

SECI, India will have DNB Ophthalmology and Fellowship Programs in almost all sub-specialties recognized by NBE, Universities and AIOS in all our units in a phased manner, to provide top quality vision and unmatched eye care services.

SEF PRESENTS FUNDRAISER WITH SUNIDHI CHAUHAN AND ALI ZAFAR

SANKARA EYE FOUNDATION
www.giftofvision.org

Sunidhi Chauhan and Ali Zafar
live in concert
San Jose and LA

Sankara Eye Foundation presents
Krazy 2

Tickets: \$150, \$99, \$79, \$69, \$49
VIP, VVIP & Sponsor

San Jose
Sunday, April 7 @ 7:00 PM
San Jose State University
Event Center

Los Angeles
Saturday, April 20 @ 7:30 PM
Nokia Theatre L.A. LIVE
777 Chick Hearn Ct, L.A.

Tickets online: www.giftofvision.org
Neema Sari Palace 562-860-1135
Sangam (Diamond Bar) 909-861-7074

408-658-0191
sefconcert@giftofvision.org

714-5-VISION (714-584-7466)
socalkrazy2@giftofvision.org

First Bollywood event at Nokia!



SANKARA OFFERS A NEW LEASE OF LIFE TO JAKAMMA

Jakamma was a happy man; at 38, he was an expectant father and his life was getting better every day. After having worked at a local general store near the Kolar Gold Fields in Karnataka for over twenty years, he bought his own dry goods store.



Although he did not make much, he was independent and earned enough to meet necessities. He was happy, content, and looking forward to building a life with his new family.

Two months ago, however, he experienced blurred vision. His condition worsened and he did not know what to do, having spent all of his money on setting up his shop, and thus could not afford to see a doctor.

His wife took care of his business for a while, as he was not able to work. But with her pregnancy progressing, she was unable to help as well and he was worried that he may go blind in his right eye. Worst of all, he was troubled that he would not be able to see his child, who was now due to arrive in only three months! His prayers seemed unanswered, and Jakamma was sad, disappointed, and afraid for his future.

WOMEN: MORE PRONE TO EYE DISEASES

Did you know that more women are diagnosed with eye diseases and conditions than men every year; that 2/3 of the blind and visual impaired in the world are women? It is also sad and ironic, when we consider that more than 75% of their eye-related problems are either preventable or curable.

Studies show that there are a number of health factors and differences between men and women that put women at greater risk of serious vision loss. Women are more susceptible to dry eye syndrome, a condition more frequent in post-menopausal and pregnant women, due to hormonal fluctuations. Women who are pregnant or receiving fertility treatments may experience changes in their vision as well. Because of an increase in hormones, some women may notice changes including refractive changes, dry eyes, puffy eyelids that obscure side vision and sensitivity to light due to migraine headaches. Older women who are post menopausal and receiving Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) treatments may also be at an increased risk for cataracts.

In general, women are so busy taking care of their families, their jobs, and their lives that they don't always have time to think about their own health. And as we get older, eyesight usually undergoes subtle changes for women and men. Women are more likely to develop vision problems at this stage. A Duke University study shows that two-thirds of people who are reported blind or visually impaired in the US are women. Though clinicians do not know the exact cause, the key factors that seem to account for this difference appear to be that women live longer, are more likely to have certain autoimmune diseases, and may have decreased access to health care. It is reported that worldwide, only 40 percent of women are able to have access to eye care services.

Fortunately, he came across a loudspeaker announcement as well as pamphlets about an eye camp by Sankara Eye Hospital that was offering eye check-ups and possibly free surgery. He could not believe his good fortune! Jakamma was one of the first to arrive at the Nangli eye camp. After several examinations, he was told he had a cataract in his right eye which could be repaired with surgery, and done at no cost to him.



Today, he has good vision in both eyes, and his first child is due within the month. An elated Jakamma says, "Sankara has been so good to me! I never knew there was a place like this to help someone like me. The people were wonderful. They cared for me and treated me with dignity. This was a true gift to me, and I will always be grateful."

Despite these odds, women can do something to remedy this. Most women are not aware of the fact that their lifestyle affects their eye health. Eating healthy, exercising regularly, avoiding excessive UV exposure and not smoking can go a long way towards good health, including eye health.

A regular preventive eye examination helps detect many eye diseases such as glaucoma (increased eye pressure) and diabetic eye diseases (retinopathy), which in the initial stages do not exhibit any symptoms. However, because women are at greater risk for vision loss and have different risks than men, it is important that women pay more attention to their eyes.

Tips for promoting healthy eyesight in women

- Include regular eye exams as part of your health routine.
- Eat a diet that is rich in vitamin C, vitamin E, beta carotene, lutein, zeaxanthin, zinc and omega-3 fatty acids.
- Quit smoking or never start in the first place.
- Wear sunglasses that block 99%-100% of UVA and UVB radiation.
- Clean your hands and your contact lenses properly to avoid the risk of infection.
- When using makeup, throw out anything you bought more than three months ago, or immediately, if your eyes become red, irritated, or you develop an allergic reaction or eye infection while using it.

SANKARA LAUNCHES BLADE-FREE iLASIK TECHNOLOGY

Sankara Eye Hospital, Coimbatore launched the revolutionary blade-free iLASIK technology to perform fully customized laser vision correction on March 10th. The event was inaugurated by Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary, Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry, who spoke about reducing prevalent rate of blindness and lauded Sankara's approach.



Dr. J. K. Reddy, Director of Sankara Eye Care Institutions, informed the audience that this is the only procedure approved by the US space agency National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). It is also used by the US Air Force and has a complication rate of close to zero.



This procedure, which would aid our patients immensely, involves three steps - the first being creating a 'vision profile,' in which a three-dimensional map of the eye recording even the minute 'imperfections' is generated. This enables the surgeon to custom-fit the treatment for each and every patient. In the next step, a laser beam is used to create a flap on the cornea, which will be folded back to perform iLASIK. The final step involves the use of another laser beam to correct the vision.

A DONOR VISITS GUJARAT HOSPITAL: SAGAR PATEL

During a recent trip to India, I visited the Sankara Eye Hospital in Anand, Gujarat for the first time. I was greeted warmly by the CEO, Mayur Vyas, who started by describing in detail the hospital itself and its social business model. The specialty of this eye hospital is being a one-stop shop for top quality medical care with specialists who can deal with various types of eye disease including very complicated cases. This extremely high quality of care ties into its social business model which makes this hospital different from other private clinics.



Due to the high quality of care and competitive prices, the Sankara Eye Hospital attracts patients from far away who will pay for their services. These patients make up about 20% of the total patients at the hospital. The other 80% of patients are given services free of charge including

transportation to the hospital, lodging, and food.

After this discussion, I went with Mr. Vyas for a tour of the hospital. The hospital was recently built and is very well maintained. Of interest to foreign visitors is the availability of eye exams and a fully stocked eyeglass shop with brand name frames and glasses. We toured the paying side then went over to the non-paying side surgery facilities. It was quite a moving scene to see many patients from village areas waiting for their surgery. I would strongly recommend donors to visit a Sankara Eye Hospital in India and see for themselves the impact of their work.



Let's Go Green!



If you would like to receive your SEF Newsletter via email, please send an email to GoGreen@giftofvision.org. Please include your donor ID and full name as seen on mailing address.

Join Our Community

Learn & share the word about our cause!



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EVENT CALENDAR

| Event | Date | Location |
|--|----------|--|
| Sunidhi Chauhan & Ali Zafar Concert | April 7 | San Jose State University Event Center, San Jose, CA |
| Sunidhi Chauhan & Ali Zafar Concert | April 20 | Nokia Theater, Los Angeles, CA |
| Shaam-E-Leher: Ghazal & Geet by Boston's Live Band 'Leher' | April 20 | Diamond Middle School, Lexington, MA |
| Arti Datta and Mudra Dance present - "Water: the Flow of the Divine", a benefit concert for Sankara Eye Foundation | April 27 | Madison Theater, NY |
| Sevathon | July 14 | Baylands Park, Sunnyvale, CA |

WAYS YOU CAN HELP...

BECOME A VOLUNTEER!

Join one of the local teams or start your own team

DONATE

Open an Eye a Month for \$30 a month!
Become a Founding Donor and leave a lasting legacy!

JOIN

The Rajasthan Core Volunteer Team and
help us build our next hospital.

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