

A World Without Childhood Blindness is a Possibility: DR. VK RAJU

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Dr. Gupta briefly described the enormous work Dr. Raju has done. Dr. Raju began the work of the Eye Foundation of America (EFA) in 1977 by offering eye camps. The West Virginia Ophthalmology Foundation was subsequently created in 1982 and became the EFA in 1992. The realization of vision Dr. Raju, the EFA, has a reach that currently extends to 30 plus developing countries and the USA. The EFA has served approximately 3 million patients and performed 300,000 plus vision-saving surgeries, with 30,000 plus surgeries performed on children alone.

Dr. Raju received standing ovation from around 60 members of Society present. Dr. Gupta offered the Society's cooperation and partnership in any project that Dr. Raju had in mind.

Dr. Raju gave a presentation on childhood blindness and dwelt on the work the Eye Foundation of America had done in the last forty years. He spoke feelingly about the tragedy of childhood blindness. Combating childhood is my passion. A world without childhood blindness is possible if we work with the same passion and zeal as the Rotary Club did to eradicate Polio. Today, except for stray cases of polio in Pakistan and Nigeria, the world is free from the scourge of Polio. It is a small world and it is getting smaller and smaller. Our Foundation- the Eye Foundation of America works in over 25 countries to combat childhood blindness.

"Since its inception, the EFA has facilitated 600 plus physician exchanges and trained 200 plus ophthalmologists, equipping these medical practitioners with the tools to join the global fight against blindness. The EFA not only trains medical practitioners to join the global fight against blindness through exchange programs, but also provides workshops and training opportunities for medical students and physicians. His charisma and vision inspire the EFA trainees return to their native countries to prevent and/or alleviate blindness in the field. For example, India and Ghana are actively engaged in avoidable blindness elimination projects with cooperation from their governments. In 2016 in India, 4,889 vision and 374 retinopathy of prematurity screenings were conducted, 779 eyeglasses were distributed, and 162 pediatric surgeries were performed. In Ghana in 2016, the Avoidable Blindness Elimination Project and the World Sight Day Kids Funfair screened 9,763 people, including 7,453 children, and detected ophthalmologic diseases in more than 1,000 individuals who consequently received treatment, which included 157 surgeries. More than 20,000 children received vision screenings in Ghana schools, eyeglasses and follow-up care were provided when necessary", Dr. Raju said.

The EFA mission is to eliminate avoidable blindness under the guiding principles of service, teaching, and research. This is accomplished through



Dr. V K Raju posed for a photograph with Dr. Suresh Kumar Gupta, President of Chandigarh Ophthalmological Society. Seen L to R: Vineet Joshi, Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, Dr. V K Raju and Dr. Suresh Kumar Gupta



Dr. V K Raju visited PTC TV headquarters in Mohali and met with editor Prabhjot Singh. Seen L to R: Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, Dr. VK Raju and Mr. Prabhjot Singh

eye camps and masonry hospitals in developing countries, training of medical personnel to serve the needy, and educating the population at large on preventative eye care and healthy lifestyle choices. Dr. Raju quotes his mentor in London as saying there are 3 solutions for any problem. The first is education, the second is education, and the third is education. With this education, patients are empowered to take charge of their lives and their own health and prevent further deleterious consequences of their poor lifestyle choices, while sharing this knowledge with their friends and families.

When education and preventative measures are insufficient, medical and

surgical interventions are performed. With the aim of permanently providing world-class state-of-the art services to populations with poor access to health care, the EFA helped to build 2 hospitals in rural India, namely the Srikanth Eye Institute and the Goutami Eye Institute. The Goutami Institute has a wing dedicated to exclusively to children, and the EFA has future plans to build a service and research eye hospital in India where no child will be denied treatment and children from around the world can come to receive services. Dr. Raju and the EFA are also committed to finding new cures for age-old eye disease in children.

For long we at the Eye Foundation of

America studied childhood blindness in Punjab and Haryana. We found the two states and the neighboring Himachal have a high incidence of childhood blindness. The already alarming figures are expected to double by 2015. Obviously, these States need attention with regard to providing facilities and services to prevent blindness among children.

Dr. Raju appealed to the members of Chandigarh Ophthalmological Society to extend a hand of cooperation to the Eye Foundation of America to combat the serious situation of childhood blindness in the region.

Thanking Dr. Gupta and the Chandigarh Ophthalmological Society, Dr. Raju said he was overwhelmed by the concern the medical fraternity felt on the issue and appreciated the members for their offer of cooperation in his projects.

Dr. Raju also thanked the veteran journalist Prabhjot Singh, Mr. Vineet Joshi and Mr. Devinder Sharma for making his meeting possible with the Chandigarh Ophthalmological Society and the media.

He said he will be happy to meet with Punjab, Haryana and Himachal State government officials to work with them on the project.

Earlier in the day he met with the media at local JM Marriott and spoke extensively about his projects and work. He took questions and repeatedly appealed to media persons to highlight the tragedy of childhood blindness which leaves individuals dependent on others for life. He was appreciative of the vibrant Chandigarh press.

Dr. Raju visited the headquarters of PTC TV in Mohali and met with Mr. Prabhjot Singh, an editor with the international channel. The two discussed the subject of incidence of childhood blindness in Punjab. Dr. Raju was accompanied by his friend Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, editor of The Indian Panorama.

Dr. Naresh Mittal, General Secretary of Dhanwantry Ayurvedic College and Hospital invited Dr. Raju for a visit of the college and the hospital and sought his expertise for setting up the department of ophthalmology. Dr. Mittal apprised Dr. Raju of the future plans of the college authorities to draw up health promotion based on a healthy style of living as recommended by the Vedic sciences.

About Dr. VK Raju

Dr. Raju was born in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, India. He earned his medical degree from Andhra University and completed an ophthalmology residency and fellowship at the Royal Eye Group of Hospitals in London, England. He is board certified in ophthalmology and is a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons and the American College of Surgeons. He has resided in Morgantown, WV since 1976, where he is currently a Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at West Virginia University,

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