

Eye Foundation of America (EFA) Receives support of AAPI to Provide Vision Care to Millions in India

By Ajay Ghosh



The Eye Foundation of America's work spreads in over 25 countries of the world, with 2 million plus patients treated, 300,000 plus surgeries performed, and, 25000 plus surgeries performed on children

"American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) is excited to join in and collaborate with the over decades of service to humanity by Dr. V.K. Raju and Eye Foundation of America (EFA) to provide vision care to millions in India," declared Dr. Naresh Parikh, President of AAPI, who has been in the forefront, identifying noble projects by Physicians of Indian Origin in India and working with them and coordinating their efforts to maximize the many services they provide across India.

AAPI has been instrumental in establishing and coordinating several projects and programs across India and established many charitable clinics, serving hundreds of thousands of people in several states in India. AAPI has been doing Global Healthcare Summit for over a decade in India and is known for its commitment to give back to India, their motherland. "The collaboration with Dr. Raju and the Foundation will help mobilize the resources at AAPI's disposal in strengthening the efforts of Dr. Raju," adds Dr. Parikh.

For the past four decades, Dr. Raju and the EFA have been actively and tirelessly on a crusade to eliminate avoidable blindness in areas plagued by poverty and poor access to medical care. The EFA's mission is to eliminate avoidable blindness under the guiding principles of service, teaching, and

research.

The realization of Dr. Raju's vision, the EFA, has a reach that currently extends to 30+ developing countries and the USA. The EFA has served approximately 2.5 million patients and performed 340,000+ vision-saving surgeries, with 30,000+ surgeries performed on children alone.

The over 40 years of noble work bringing vision to millions in India started unexpectedly for Dr. Raju. While living in London, Dr. V.K. Raju traveled home to India on vacation, where a farmer asked him to examine his eyes. Dr. Raju complied, but without any instruments. In 1977, Dr. Raju returned to rural India with personnel and equipment and offered his first eye camp near his hometown in 1977. This was the inception of the foundation's work, beginning with the West Virginia Ophthalmology Foundation. The West Virginia Ophthalmology Foundation subsequently became the EFA in 1992.

"I feel so incredibly thankful for my personal and professional gifts, and I make great efforts to share those gifts with those in need of my services," says Dr. Raju, and he generously gives freely of his own time, money, and medical expertise to help the less fortunate for the past several decades.

This is accomplished through eye camps and brick-and-mortar 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. With adequate education, patients are empowered to take charge of



The Founder and President of the Eye Foundation of America, Dr. V.K. Raju is an eminent ophthalmologist who has authored a number of articles and a book "Musings on Medicine, Myth, and History: India's Legacy". His vision is to create a world without childhood blindness.

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.

The public is educated on eye care and injury prevention, and local teachers are taught how to screen for early eye problems in children. Patients, their families, and the greater community benefit from preventative medical care, free procedures, and access to education.

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: the Srikanth Eye Institute and the Goutami Eye Institute.

The Goutami Institute has a wing dedicated 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.

The Institute has provided service to more than 400,000 patients and 50,000 surgeries have been performed. It has become an

autonomous institution, and Raju has raised over \$6 million to establish and fund the two facilities. "You can never be tired of giving back," he says. "But to have real success, your intentions should be pure. It is a spiritual act."

Since its inception, the EFA has facilitated 600+ physician exchanges and trained 200+ 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.

Born and raised in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, India, Dr. Raju 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 (WVU), the Section Chief of the Ophthalmology Department at Monongalia General Hospital, practices at Regional Eye Associates, and is the Founder and Medical Director of the EFA, a registered non-profit organization.

Dr. Raju has received many honors and awards, including 26 distinguished awards and 17 gold medals. In Dr. Raju's adopted home state of West Virginia, he was awarded both the Lions Club International (Morgantown) Jarrett Award and the WVU International Service Award in 1995. Morgantown Rotary International presented Dr. Raju with an award for community service in 2000. He also received the Martin Luther King Jr. Achievement Award from WVU in 2008.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) has awarded Dr. Raju 4 times for his teaching and research contributions, including the Outstanding Humanitarian Award in 2002 as Dr. Raju had donated more than \$1 million dollars of his own money that went into building hospitals in India, teaching, and providing services to needy patients.

Dr. Raju received a Lifetime Achievement Award from The Association of Asian Indians in Ophthalmology in the same year and received the Free to Achieve Award from the Maryland chapter of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) for his philanthropy.

AAPI awarded Dr. Raju with their prestigious Distinguished Community Service Award in 2007 for his service, patient care, teaching, research, and professional and community involvement. In 2011, he received a Senior Achievement Award from the AAO. He has received awards from Lions International and Rotary International. For his humanitarian work, the American Medical Association Foundation acknowledged him with the prestigious Dr. Nathan Davis International Award for Excellence in Medicine in 2013. For the past 39 years, Dr. Raju has expanded his humanitarian efforts in African countries by joining and joined the Carter Center's



AAPI leadership at the Indian Consulate in New York where AAPI President declared support for the Eye Foundation of America. Dr. Raju is seen standing third from right

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