

Internship
At
Sankara Eye Hospital, Coimbatore

By
Dr. Tarvinder Kaur
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The IIHMR University, Jaipur

1, Prabhu Dayal Marg, Sanganer Airport

Jaipur 302029, Rajasthan

Ph: 0141-3924700, Fax: 3924738

Website: www.iihmr.edu.in

Introduction-

Blindness is a serious global public health problem of understated importance. 80% of this problem is avoidable, i.e., either preventable or treatable; 90 % of those who are blind live in the developing countries of the world. The risk of blindness increases significantly with poverty, older age and in women. It is a sad fact that 1/4th of the world's population of blind live in India, and 4 million new cases of curable blindness are being added to the existing backlog, annually. A majority of the population vulnerable to blindness and potentially blinding condition live in the rural areas.

Projections estimate the number of blind people in India in 2000 to be 18.7 million (95% CI 15.2–22.3); if the current trend continued, this number is expected to increase to 31.6 million by 2020 helped along the way by the demographic reality of an aging population. The economic burden of blindness in India calculated (at base price for the year 1997) is Rs. 159 billion (US\$ 4.4 billion), and the cumulative loss over lifetime of the blind is Rs. 2,787 billion (US\$ 77.4 billion).

In May 1977, Dr. R.V. Ramani and his wife, Dr. Radha Ramani set up a Primary Health Care Centre for the needy with the mission to serve the poor people. Today, Sankara Eye Foundation is a Not-for-Profit healthcare organization, one of the largest community Eye Care networks with a pan India presence. SEF has established itself as a leading organizations in Eye care by:

- Establishing hospitals in various states across India.
- Establishing Teleophthalmology enabled Vision Centers in Indian villages.
- Coverage to needy through vision screening camps.

Sankara Eye Foundation is working with a vision to eradicate preventable and curable blindness.

Objectives of Internship:

The main objectives of this internship are:

- To get knowledge of all the eye care and other services offered by the hospital.
- To understand the process flow of the hospital.
- To critically analyse the challenges faced by the organization and apply solutions for smooth functioning of hospital.
- To improve the processes of organization using management skills.
- To participate in the new initiatives started by the organization for learning opportunities.
- To utilize the learning opportunities to enhance management skills.

- To handle different patient populations.
- To explore opportunities that enhance interpersonal skills, attitudes and values.

Organisational Profile:

Started as a small primary health care centre in the year 1977 by Dr R.V. Ramani and Dr Radha Ramani, today Sankara is one among the largest and fastest growing social enterprise managing 11 super specialty eye care hospitals located across Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh , Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Their Network of Hospitals is equipped with state of the art technology to perform advance eye surgeries. Sankara Eye Foundation India is a protagonist of National Eye Health Care Movement in India, continuously transforming the eye care delivery structure through various Eye Care Initiatives across age groups, cutting edge technology, scientific approach, innovation, research & training. The origins of Sankara Eye Foundation can be traced back to the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Medical Trust.

The Model of Sankara Eye Foundation, India is an **80-20 model**. This model aims to provide best in class eye care treatment to everyone where 80 % of the beneficiaries are the underprivileged who receive treatment for free, while remaining 20% are the affluent sections of the society, cross subsidizing the total cost of treatment for poor population. The hybrid revenue model ensures that each of the Sankara hospitals is financially self-sufficient in five years. Apart from the 11 Sankara Hospitals spread across the country, Sankara Eye Foundation India has **16 vision centers** also spread across 7 states of the country and is planning to setup at least 50 more VCs across different states of the country in upcoming years. Vision Centre is basically a permanent eye care facility in the community which acts as the first point of interface of the population with comprehensive eye care services provided by an exclusive skilled eye care worker.

Under the Umbrella of Sankara Eye Foundation India, there are various Programs running to provide best in class eye care services to all sections of the Society especially to poor and needy people. ***Gift of Vision** is a flagship initiative of Sankara Eye Foundation India which aims to provide high quality, cost effective and readily available community eye care at the doorsteps of Rural India.*

Under this Program

- Vision Health Visitors (VHV) or Sankara's Field Workers conduct a preliminary survey covering a region of 40–50 km around the camp village.
- Those identified with an eye problem are referred to a centralized camp scheduled on a predetermined date.

- Rural Eye Camps are conducted where patients undergo Vision Screening by Eye Surgeons and Fitness Evaluation.
- Identified patients are transported to the Base Hospital for surgery, provided with accommodation, investigated, treated accordingly with IOL implants, medicines and food, all free of cost.
- One month later, all the operated patients are reviewed at the camp site as a Medical Audit and Qualitative Analysis.

In 1996, SEFI launched another Program called “**Rainbow**” exclusively for School Children with the aim to provide bright future for visually impaired children. Other Programs running under SEFI Umbrella are ***Maitri, Diabetic Retinopathy, Nanna Kannu and Women Empowerment Programs.***

In March 2019, Dr. R.V. Ramani was awarded ***Padma Shri*** (a highest civilian award) by Govt. of India for his magnanimous and generous efforts for the betterment and social upliftment of the society by providing free, affordable and quality eye care treatment to all sections of the society and especially to the poor and needy.

Services Provided By the Organisation:

Sankara Eye Hospital, Coimbatore is a 550 bedded hospital having 150 beds for paying patients and 400 beds reserved exclusively for non-paying patients and total of 5 fully functional OTs. Sankara Eye Foundation is committed to clinical excellence and provides best in class eye care treatment to all sections of the society especially to the poor and needy people.

The Organisation provides various Super Speciality Services to provide best in class eye care services to all sections of the society. These services include-

- Cataract
- Glaucoma
- Cornea
- Lasik
- Orbit and Occuloplasty
- Paediatric Ophthalmology
- Ocular Oncology
- Vitreo Retina
- UVEA
- Vision Therapy

The hospitals are equipped with the most modern facilities with highly skilled and dedicated specialists and highly motivated staff. It provides variety of services under one roof from a routine vision examination to LASIK eye surgery and other complex eye care surgeries.

The Hospital also provides range of Eye Care Diagnostic Services also to its patients that primarily includes

- A-Scan
- Ultrasonography
- FFA
- HFA
- Pachymetry
- Corneal Topography
- OCT
- Green Laser
- YAG Laser

Apart from super speciality Services, the hospital also provides services such as:

- Eye Bank
- Cafeteria
- Transport
- Medical Insurance Facilities (Both Govt and Private Insurance Schemes)
- Contact Lens Services
- Computer Vision Clinics
- Opticals
- Pharmacy
- Counselling
- Housekeeping
- Inpatient Rooms and Day care Lounge.

Sankara Eye Foundation, India is committed to provide quality ophthalmic treatment and care with the highest levels of skill, competence and concern, by adopting the latest technologies, techniques and practices in prevention, diagnosis and treatment in all ophthalmological specialties.

Key Activities / Projects Undertaken Other than Dissertation-

This internship provided an opportunity to be a part of various important projects and to learn more about the organization and management in general. Some of the activities include:

- Observing the functioning and process flow of the hospital and the various systems used to ease the workload of staff and to provide patient satisfaction with high quality services.
- Creating content related to various common eye problems in adults and children, their causes and possible solutions. This project was aimed at providing brief overview of these common eye problems to people to create awareness.
- Creating content for awareness campaign related to various eye exercises which can be performed by people with eye problems or health individuals as a precautionary measure to maintain health of eyes.
- Standardizing the various elements of monthly review meeting to facilitate uniform comparison across various units of Sankara Eye Foundation. This project included:
 - Comparing the various elements of Monthly Review Meeting from various units of Sankara eye foundation.
 - Analysing the most important elements required for monthly review meeting.
 - Preparing the presentation with required elements.
- Creating a case study report after analysing the challenges in management in expanding the organization and fulfilling its objectives to reach every door step to accomplish its mission to eliminate preventable blindness.
- Creating content related to the level of automation in the organization and the services automated for the efficient working of the system.

Key Learnings from the Internship:

The various learnings from the projects undertaken during internship period were:

- Knowledge of various types of services provided by the organization and effective management of various departments.
- Knowledge of Process flow of the organization and the various softwares used for smooth functioning of the organization.
- Knowledge of various challenges in management of daily activities and identifying possible solutions and their feasibility.
- Knowledge of various eye related problems, how to design marketing activities, setting target audience.
- Understanding of various elements of Monthly review meeting.

- Identification of important elements necessary to standardise the MRM for a more efficient and a less time consuming monthly meetings..
- Understanding the challenges faced by the management in expanding the organization and how the organization moved from fully funded community hospital to self-sufficient hospital serving both paying and non-paying patients.
- Learning about the upgradation of various services using automation for increased efficiency.
- Understanding the management issues related to new technology introduced to enhance the efficiency of services.