

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURATION OF 9TH RETICON CONFERENCE
ORGANISED BY DR.AGARWALS EYE HOSPITAL AT ITC GRAND CHOLA,
CHENNAI ON 21.04.2019 AT 11.30 AM**

Anaivarukkum Vanakkam

Prof. Amar Agarwal,
Chairman, Dr. Agarwals Eye Hospital

Dr. Athiya Agarwal,
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Dr. Lalit Verma,
Chairman Scientific Committee,
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New Delhi

**Distinguished Invitees
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me great pleasure to be here today at this inauguration of the 9th Reticon 2019, a conference dedicated to research and advances about the retina in the eye. That the conference is being held in the city of Chennai, which serves as a hub for medical tourism in the country is a matter of satisfaction to all of us.

The eye is one of the most complex organs of the human body about which a lot of study has already been undertaken and about which many more interesting and useful discoveries will be made. With the growth of economic prosperity and technology it is also among the foremost of the sensory organs in providing inputs to the human brain. With the greater use of appliances such as the television, the computer

and the cell phone, the eye is today, credited with providing nearly 80% of the inputs to the sensory system.

For most people, it is a matter of course that when they open their eyes, they see the world. But we must understand that there is a complex process by which the eyes function.

When you see an object or read a magazine, the light rays reflecting off the object penetrate our eyes and first strike the Cornea. After the Cornea, the rays traverse the anterior eye chamber and pupil in the iris. The iris actually determines the colour of the eye. The anterior chamber is filled with the fluid which nourishes the Cornea and the lens of the eyes. There is an unique system that drains out the excess fluid from the eye. The iris dilates or shrinks the pupil regulating the quantum of light rays penetrating the eye. The rays then go through the lens of the eye, which is enveloped by the ciliary muscles which regulate the curvature of the lens. After passing through the lens, the light rays strike the Retina which has photo receptors numbering more than 100 million. The information from the Retina is relayed to the vision centre of the brain, through the optic nerve. It is, thus that we see an object or a picture. As you can all see the process of vision is a complex one. Even if one of the components in the process is affected, vision is impaired.

This conference is particularly devoted to the retina. The common retinal diseases in India are Diabetic Retinopathy, Retinal vascular occlusion, Age related degeneration, Hereditary retinal degeneration and Retinal detachment etc.

India is expected to be having a large diabetic population of about 7 crores by 2025. It is a well known fact that progression and severity of

diabetic Retinopathy is directly related to the duration of diabetes and that early medical intervention is necessary to prevent visual impairment in a significant way.

Retinal Vascular Occlusion is a common cause of vision loss in older individuals and the second most common vascular disease after diabetic Retinopathy. Laser photocoagulation is widely practised to mitigate the effects of retinal vascular occlusion.

The prevalence of age related degeneration ranges from 1.8% to 4.7% in the Indian population. Early diagnosis and treatment with anti VEGF injections improves visual acuity and helps to prevent deterioration in the condition of the eye.

Some Retinal diseases which can be successfully treated with surgeries are retinal detachment, vitreous hemorrhage etc. Newer technology in surgical management of retinal diseases offers a significant improvement in the success rate in surgeries.

I am mentioning all this to highlight the extent to which expert ophthalmic care which is in the hands of each one of you here, can mitigate the impact of retinal disease and help to restore human vision.

The population of the blind in India is estimated to rise to 1.5 crores by 2020. There are only about 15000 ophthalmologists in India who are registered with the All India Ophthalmic society gives us a ratio of about 1 ophthalmologist for about a lakh of people. Even assuming that there are another 15,000 eye doctors not registered with the society, the number of eye doctors in the country does definitely need to increase.

Countries like India will also have a need to encourage faster and precision based systems of medical treatment so that large populations can be covered within the shortest possible time. Robotic eye surgery is one such example which is being increasingly adopted to bring in greater precision and speed in surgical procedures related to the eye. In India, Tamil Nadu has traditionally been considered as the leader in the use of the latest procedures for medical treatment. Seen in that context the convening of Reticon at Chennai is most appropriate and timely.

Prevention is better than cure is a old saying. While it is important for us to enhance our capabilities in cure of diseases, it is even more important to ensure that the various organs of the human body gifted to us at the time of birth are properly maintained by adopting simple techniques. For example, for better eye care, it is well known that offering prayers to the morning sun helps in improving eye sight. This is so, because it provides the automatic exercise for the ciliary muscles which envelop the eye lens. Similarly another common technique that is practiced is to rub mustard oil on the soles of one's feet. I have also observed people adding a small quantity of pepper to clarified butter and drinking it in the morning, to improve their eye sight. I am sure that the distinguished audience assembled here is also aware of many other techniques such as exercising the eyes regularly to ensure that they are maintained in fine trim.

I am mentioning all this for you to appreciate that the ocean of knowledge is vast and limitless. While the system of medicine in which you have been trained has its own benefits, it is important that there is a continuous inter-action between different medical traditions, whether modern or ancient, whether of the west or east, so that they could blend harmoniously and rid each other of their defects. It is necessary to

create a new model for health and healing, keeping the patient at the core of the treatment, without being fixated on a single system of medicine.

Conference such as this help us to exchange ideas, share advancements in technology and look at more cost effective methods of providing treatment. There is no limit to the boundaries of learning. As Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to say, "As long as I live so do I learn". With reference to the retina one can mention an example which is apt and relevant. Till the 1990s, we were all only aware of the existence of rods and cones in the retina. The later discovery of the retinal ganglion cells which are found in the innermost layer of the retina have given us a more enlightened understanding of how the process of vision occurs.

As the Governor of the State which can be legitimately proud of having established the first eye hospital in Asia. I feel privileged in having the opportunity to address the members of this distinguished audience who have come together to find solutions for problems that plague mankind. Your contributions at the conference are going to be stellar and path breaking and I extend my best wishes and greetings for the achievement of this laudable objective of yours. My special appreciation is due to the Dr. Agarwal eye hospital who have been pioneers in the area of eye treatment in Chennai city. They have taken painstaking efforts to organize this conference of eminent ophthalmologists from far and wide. I am sure that the deliberations at the conference will provide more light to the profession, greater wisdom to society and better vision to all of mankind.

Let us all play our roles in leading mankind from darkness to light. Tamasoma Jyotir Gamaya is the saying in our ancient scriptures. I am only echoing those words of wisdom.

Nandri Vanakkam.....

Jai Hind.....