

Vision Excellence Awards: Ram Prasad Pokhrel

Vision Atlas

Valued Supplier Scheme

World Sight Day 2020



Four decades ago, the surgical outputs of the eye care services in Nepal were limited to only 800-1200 eye surgeries per year only. Prof. Dr. Ram Prasad Pokhrel with the help of small team of like-minded persons established the first Eye Hospital in 1974 in Kathmandu, using his own set of equipment's and offering his time voluntarily. Following the encouraging result from the functioning of the Nepal Eye Hospital and to cater the need of eye care services, the same team established Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh (NNJS), in order to develop and expand the eye care services at national level.

As government has other major health priority and blindness and eyecare were not adequately supported, Dr. Pokhrel approached to the international community advocating and appealing to provide support to combat blindness in Nepal. Following his untiring efforts, the first ever nation-wide blindness survey was carried out in Nepal in 1981.

The result of the survey showed that 0.84% of the population was blind, 80% of the blindness was avoidable and 92% of all the blinds reside in the rural area. Cataract accounted for more than two thirds of Nepal's blindness. A national master plan on eye health based on survey results were developed which served as foundation of eye care service development in Nepal.

Nepal adopted VISION 2020 strategies in eye care services of Nepal in 1999, was the first country in South East Asia. He successfully advocated with the government to launch VISION 2020 in Nepal and prepared a National Plan of Action to achieve the goal. After the VISION 2020 was launched, he actively took leadership to develop eye care infrastructure and required human resource in the country. This resulted development of tertiary level eye hospital, secondary level eye hospital and primary eye care centers as per plan. Many national and international government and non-government organizations, agencies, trusts and the local philanthropist supported Dr Pokhrel's this noble effort of eye care services in the country.

During the last two decades, due to his able leadership, NNJS eye care service network has been expanded with 20 eye hospitals and 121 primary eye care centres in the country.

National Trachoma Programme launched by NNJS as national Programme, the second leading cause of blindness in 1981 has been eliminated from Nepal as a public health problem in 2018. The overall prevalence of blindness has been decreased from 0.84% in 1981 to 0.35% in 2012. Another national blindness survey using Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (RAAB) surveys methodology is underway now to assess the impact of eye care services in 2020. The founder as well as Patron of NNJS Dr Pokhrel is regarded and respected in the country as "The Father of Eye Care Services in Nepal". He has been a constant source of inspiration to so many individuals and organizations with a conscience.

Quote: Contribution of Prof. Dr. Ram Prasad Pokhrel for prevention of blindness and implementing VISION 2020 initiative will always be remembered in the history of eye care program of Nepal.