

CASE STUDY SERIES

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The Aravind Eye Care System: Delivering the Most Precious Gift

Unlike most people who retire to a quiet life, Padmashree Dr. G. Venkataswamy, affectionately referred to as “Dr. V,” saw his leaving the Government Medical College, Madurai as the head of the Department of Ophthalmology, in 1976, as an opportunity to face a challenge that personally troubled him: For an estimated 45 million people worldwide, and 9 million in India, the precious gift of sight had been snatched away, most often needlessly. His vision was simple, yet grand: Eradicate needless blindness at least in Tamil Nadu, his home state, if not in the entire nation of India.

THE INNOVATION. . .

Motivated by the vision to eradicate all needless blindness in India, Aravind Eye Care System embarked on a series of innovations to bring world-class eye care to the poorest people in rural and urban India. Focusing on innovations in the organization of workflow—from patient identification to postoperative care—Aravind has built the world’s premier eye care institution. It is the largest eye care system in the world. It is also the most productive, and boasts world-class outcome rates.

Beginning in 1976 with a modest 11-bed private clinic in Dr. V’s brother’s house in Madurai, with a mission of eradicating needless blindness, his dream, by 2003, had grown into The Aravind Eye Care System. It was not merely a chain of hospitals, but an eye care system consisting of a center for manufacturing synthetic lenses, sutures, and pharmaceuticals related to eye care; an institute for training; an institute for research; an international eye bank; a women and child

Compiled by C. K. Prahalad from a more detailed case study prepared by S. Manikutty and Neharika Vohra of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, 2003.

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