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Case study highlights HR practices of Aravind Eye Care

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Madurai: The [Society for Human Resources Management \(SHRM\) in India](#) has published a case study on unique HR practices followed at [Aravind Eye Care System \(AECS\)](#), a chain of hospitals and centres that serve many urban, rural and remote areas. The self-sustaining and organic HR template of AECS helps the organisation to draw and retain the best medical talent.

AECS operates with a unique service-oriented model. Free treatment and care is made available to those who cannot pay. For all the rest, affordable eye care services are provided. Cataract surgeries form 70 per cent of all operations. In 2008-09, over 1,50,000 people availed of the free services at AECS. An equal number paid for their services at very modest rates.

"The HR policies practiced here have been AECS's trump card," [says](#) the case study author Rani G Priyadarshini, associate professor (organisational behaviour and human resource), [Amrita School of Business, Coimbatore](#). "AECS recruits without commercial media advertisements. It advertises its personnel needs through announcements during camps and referrals through employees."

According to Rani G Priyadarshini, AECS has well-evolved in-house training operations. Currently, it runs programmes to develop ophthalmologists, paramedics, eye care managers and support service personnel. It was accredited to offer diplomas in ophthalmology in 1982, and subsequently recognised to offer MS in ophthalmology in 1986. Since 1988, it has also been offering fellowship programmes in various disciplines of eye care.

"Integration of facilities and support systems ensure that a surgeon here can perform 2,000 surgeries per year against the global average of around 500," says Rani G Priyadarshini. "Surgeons perform six to eight operations per hour on an assembly line basis with the support of internally-trained mid-level ophthalmic personnel."

AECS trains mid-level ophthalmic personnel, mostly women from villages, who are trained in a two-year course. These women never had the chance to go to college, now they get the opportunity to enter the work stream as mid-tier technicians, according to Rani G Priyadarshini.

Currently, 338 medical officers and consultants, 1,313 mid-level ophthalmic personnel and 496 administrative staff are on AECS's rolls. "While structured training programmes have kept up a steady supply of new personnel, continuous education has helped existing workers widen their skills. There is a low rate of attrition. Not only that, there is a sizeable waiting list of applicants," adds Rani G Priyadarshini.