

A New Plan for Joint Rotary-IFOS Scholarship

A program for young ophthalmologists from developing countries

The progress of Vision 2020 (www.v2020.org) makes it now necessary to intensify the post-doctoral training of young ophthalmologists. The Rotary Foundation (TRF), represented by Past Chairman Frank Devlyn (Mexico) and PDG Steve Brown (California), who manages TRF's Avoidable Blindness Donor Advised Fund (AB-DAF) has set up a Joint Endeavor with the International Federation of Ophthalmologic Societies (IOFS), now headed by President Prof. Bruce Spivey (California) and Treasurer Prof. Gabel (Germany). The new European Coordinator is PDG Prof. Fabio Dossi (Italy).

The Background:

1. IOL (Intra-Ocular Lens) high-quality cataract surgeries for poor people can now be made at very low costs : from \$25 (US\$) per surgery in India to \$40 (US\$) in Africa. Local eye surgeons are very proficient but need training on the most modern **equipment**, both for quality and for cost-effectiveness. The surgery and equipment costs are shared between host Clubs and supporting Rotary Clubs, TRF, local health authorities and international NGOs such as Operation Eyesight Universal (OEU, Calgary, Canada) which is a main supporter of our 100,000 cataract operations in India.
2. Many Rotary Clubs in India, Africa, Latin America have gained valuable experience in conducting eye camps, with the result that thousands of needy people can be efficiently identified and transported towards the competent centres and hospitals.
3. The resulting need is obviously to increase the number of well-trained young ophthalmologists committed to return to their country after 3-month training abroad. According to former IFOS-Treasurer PHF Prof. Gloor (Zurich), about 100 such Scholarships are required per year, each costing about \$6,000 (US\$). However only 50 are presently available, partly through IFOS' ICO US Foundation, partly because surgeons like Prof. Gloor and Prof. Naumann (Germany) generously contribute private funds to program. Hence the need to fund up to 50 additional Scholarships per year.

In 2005-06, European Clubs were able to contribute towards 12 Joint Scholarships for young eye surgeons from Asia and Africa in hospitals in Europe, India, Brazil and the USA, incl. 4 funded by Clubs in Germany and 3 in Switzerland. To illustrate the merit of IFOS (Prof. Gloor and Prof. Gabel) in making possible these global Scholarships respecting heavy constraints regarding languages and medical specialisation, here are 3 recent examples, with repeated thanks to our European

Rotarian funding Coordinators and to ABDAF Coordinator PDG Steve Brown :

- One Scholarship for an eye-surgeon from **Mongolia** at the University Hospital of Bordeaux, **France**, funded thanks to PP Jean Viste, RC Golfe-de-Fos, D1760, France ;
- One Scholarship for an eye-surgeon from the **Maldives Islands** at the University Hospital Sap Paulo, **Brazil**, funded by 3 Clubs from **Portugal** and 1 from D1710 (**France**), thanks to PP Jorge Amaral AB Coordinator of D1970 (**Portugal**)
- Two Scholarships at the University Hospital of Ghent (**Belgium**) for eye-surgeons from **India** and **Mexico**, thanks to AB Coordinator Philippe Caron of D1620, **Belgium**.

Each Scholarship received \$2000 (US\$) from the AB-DAF of TRF and all young eye surgeons are required to present their plans and results to **both the host and the home Rotary Clubs**.

(Editors Note: This article is another in a series of valuable and informative articles from our Action Group member, Gabriel Minder, who serves as Rotary's representative at the World Health Organization in Geneva.)

Annual Meeting
of the Rotarian
Action Group for
Blindness Prevention
Monday
June 18, 2007
8:00 am—9:30 am
Salt Palace Convention
Center
Room 251C
Salt Lake City, Utah
(USA)