

The Rotary Club Host Project

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A partnership of **Rotary Clubs** and **EyeCare America®**

A public service foundation of the **American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO)**

The purpose of this partnership is to reduce the rate of avoidable blindness and visual impairment in economically developing nations – by providing international ophthalmologists with opportunities for ophthalmic education that will directly effect the quality of eye care and enhance the training of needed ophthalmic personnel in their country. In addition, the partnership generates the goodwill, learning and lasting relationships among individuals that comes from cross-cultural knowledge and contact.

The success of this partnership is based on the combined strengths of two well-established organizations committed to creating awareness and taking action. Rotary's strength is a worldwide network of individuals committed to the service of others, united in a strong and effective organizational structure. The American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) and EyeCare America®'s strengths are in clinical education and the expertise of their members and volunteers. The Host Project provides learning opportunities for carefully selected ophthalmologists from around the world, and strengthens professional and

personal ties between United States' (U.S.) ophthalmologists and their international colleagues.

The guest ophthalmologists are brought to the U.S. for two weeks. The first week is spent in a community, hosted by the sponsoring Rotary Club, where the guest experiences professional, educational, cultural and social activities. Typically, guests learn how ophthalmology is practised in the U.S. by visiting ophthalmology practices, medical centers, or a free clinic. They observe surgeries and engage in discussions with their U.S. colleagues. Some guests have the opportunity to learn how ophthalmology is taught in the U.S. by spending a few days at a university department of ophthalmology and interacting with faculty and students. The guests meet members of the local Rotary Clubs, and talk to them about eye care services in their countries. In addition, many of the guests enjoy home cooked meals around a family dinner table, attend a sporting event, a church service, or cultural and political events.

During the second week, the guests attend the AAO annual meeting. From a wide selection of instruction courses, skill transfer courses and symposia in all areas and sub-specialties of ophthalmology, guests choose the activities that would be of most value to their particular situation and practice. They learn about the latest ophthalmic technology and equipment on the exhibit floor, and make contact with representatives from the ophthalmic indus-

try. In addition, they make contact with their colleagues from around the world and with international eye care service organizations.

A new post-meeting benefit was tried in 2002. Sponsored by Alcon Laboratories, three of the guests were invited to visit Alcon headquarters in Ft. Worth, Texas. Here they participated in an educational program, attended a rodeo and visited a ranch in the company of ophthalmologists from many different nations.

Upon return home, the guest ophthalmologists share what they learned with colleagues. Through participation in the host project, the doctors update their skills, broaden their knowledge and establish relationships. They are enabled to train others for the benefit of patients.

Regional chairpersons of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) are contacted and requested to recommend an individual from their region who meets guest selection guidelines. The recommended individuals may then be invited to apply. Occasionally, leaders of other international organizations or national ophthalmic societies may be asked to recommend. Sponsoring Rotary Clubs may select their guest from a small pool of approved candidates from different geographic regions.

Rotary Clubs interested in sponsoring an ophthalmologist may contact Wendy Ovaitt (wovaitt@aao.org). As sponsorship is available for only a few guest ophthalmologists each year, guest application is by invitation only.

Report

Intercontinental Medicare Project in Ethiopia

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Introduction

In 1999, the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International undertook a project which was named the Intercontinental Medicare Project in Ethiopia. Rotary clubs from India, Ethiopia and the USA participated in this unique project which was a resounding success, not just in terms of the number and quality of the operations done, but also in bringing people of India, Ethiopia and the USA closer to each other and so fostering understanding and friendship amongst them.

The matching grant and new opportunities grant project was planned in order to perform 400 introcular lens implant surgeries in Ethiopia (along with polio-corrective and plastic surgeries). In Africa there are about 3 million cataract blind to which

50,000 new cases are added each year. A huge backlog has accumulated in rural areas and low-income urban slums. India faces similar problems. Indian surgeons are trained in performing cataract operations with limited resources and with reasonably good outcome. We are experienced in doing many operations in a short span of time.

Project Funding and Implementation

Funding for this project included the cost of surgery, transport and food for patients in Ethiopia. Materials required for 400 operations, e.g., lenses, sutures, gloves, drugs, syringes and needles were taken from India. Packets of medicines required for the post-operative period of one month were distributed to all patients. The ophthalmic