



## Dr Erika Sutter

1917–2015

We put aside our sadness at the death of Erika Sutter, at the impressive age of 98, to celebrate the life of a truly remarkable pioneering ophthalmologist and inspirational human being.

Some of the *Community Eye Health Journal's* readers will have been touched by Erika's powerful promotion of community development in her capacity as an ophthalmologist, a teacher at the International Centre for Eye Health (ICEH) in London and the Swiss Tropical Institute in Basel, and author of academic papers and educational books, most notably *Hanyane, A Village Struggles for Eye Health*.

Erika Sutter was born and raised in Basel, Switzerland. After completing a doctorate in plant physiology in 1952, she worked for Roche and then the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Throughout this time her faith guided her towards a missionary life. She joined the Swiss Mission in South Africa and took up the position of laboratory technician at the missionary hospital in Elim, an impoverished rural area in North-Eastern South Africa. Here her alertness

to social disparities made her acutely aware of the injustices of apartheid and the need to address the political and social causes of disease.

In 1956, Erika was accepted to study medicine in South Africa. As there was a need for an eye specialist at Elim Hospital, she trained further in Switzerland, returning to South Africa in 1965 as a fully qualified ophthalmologist. She worked tirelessly at Elim Hospital while at the same time developing dreams for a comprehensive approach to blindness prevention. Her dreams were realised in three important projects: the introduction of a Diploma in Ophthalmic Nursing, the establishment of the Rivoni Rehabilitation Centre for Visually Impaired and Blind People, and, most notably, the Elim Care Group Project. Having treated the late effects of trachoma for many years, Erika realised that "it was necessary to come out of the hospital and to the people, there where the disease starts – in order to reach those who could still do something to prevent it." Working with Selina Maphorogo, she founded the Care Groups, village self-help groups working for better health in their communities. Within three years of starting the project, the prevalence of active trachoma had decreased by 50%. The movement is still strong more than 30 years later with around 2,000 members in over 200 villages working for improved health and social development.

Those of us who worked with Erika at ICEH admired her for her humility, her dogged determination to do a job properly with meticulous attention to detail, and her belief that the perspectives of the powerless – village women, and health workers low down in the medical hierarchy – are crucial to finding solutions.

*Victoria Francis, London, August 2015*

### Further reading

Erika Sutter. Seen with Other Eyes. Memories of a Swiss Eye Doctor in Rural South Africa. Told by Gertrud Stiehle. Lives Legacies Legends Vol 10, Basler Afrika Bibliographien 2013. ISBN 978-3-905758-33-7

## Peek

Peek, the Portable Eye Examination Kit, is a set of diagnostic tools that allows eye care workers to use a smartphone to screen eye patients. It makes use of 'cloud'-based systems to enable data sharing, referral and follow-up of patients.

The Peek team has developed tests for visual acuity, contrast, colour, visual fields, and childhood vision.

Peek Acuity, the visual acuity test (soon to be released on Android phones in late 2015/early 2016), is shown in a validation study published in *JAMA Ophthalmology* to be reliable, accurate and fast. It has since been used by teachers in a school screening programme in Kenya in which over 20,000 children were screened in two weeks.

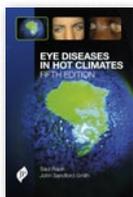
Peek is also working closely with partners to provide population-based survey tools, outreach systems and educational materials – all of which will be done using a smartphone.

Peek apps will be free to download from the Google Play store once ready for release. To keep updated on our research, release dates and news, please sign up to our newsletter at [www.peakvision.org](http://www.peakvision.org)



**A community health worker uses Peek to measure someone's vision in their own home. KENYA**

## BOOK REVIEW



## Eye diseases in hot climates (5th edition)

It is now almost 30 years since this excellent text was first published and ten years since the 4th edition. The book has become a staple

for all eye health professionals who have worked in places where blindness is still such a scourge for poor communities.

The 5th edition, with its striking cover illustration, has been extensively revised to reflect the changes that have taken place over the last ten years. Diseases such as macular degeneration and

diabetic retinopathy now feature more prominently, but all the main causes of blindness, including cataract, are covered.

The book starts with an excellent review of global blindness, its propensity for hot climates, the impact of VISION 2020 and the community eye health approach to prevention and health education.

One of the pillars of VISION 2020 is the eye care team and this book caters for ophthalmic nurses, clinical officers, assistants and medical students as well as ophthalmologists who will find it an

invaluable aid to their practice.

I recommend this book to all those interested in 'tropical' ophthalmology and who want a clearly written, beautifully illustrated and comprehensive text.

*Nick Astbury*

The book is available at the greatly discounted price of £12 + postage and packing (£30 on Amazon) through the Ulverscroft Foundation. To order the book at this price, contact Joyce Sumner, Ulverscroft Foundation, The Green, Bradgate Road, Anstey, Leicestershire, LE7 7FU, UK. tel: +44(0)116 236 1595 fax: +44(0)116 236 1594. Email [foundation@ulverscroft.co.uk](mailto:foundation@ulverscroft.co.uk) or visit [www.foundation.ulverscroft.com/EyeBooks.htm](http://www.foundation.ulverscroft.com/EyeBooks.htm) to find out about other textbooks available from Ulverscroft.