A Solution in Sight: Collaboration to Improve Access to the World’s Ophthalmic Information

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The Problem

- 285 million people are blind or visually impaired, world-wide
- 80% of blindness is preventable or curable
- 90% of the world’s visually impaired live in developing countries

Cataracts are the leading cause of blindness

• Refractive error
• Women in all areas and at all ages are at higher risk for visual impairment, due to longer life expectancy and to less access to services. Even in developed countries, women and minorities have more visual impairments.

Blind children: 0.3/1000 children in affluent countries; 1.5/1000 in very poor countries; 40% of the causes are preventable or treatable. Gender inequities are also common for children.

• Cost/DALY saved by cataract surgery: US$ 20-40, as low as US$10 in high-volume settings
• Cost/DALY saved by distribution of vitamin A to children 2x/year is US$59

VISION 2020: The Right to Sight
Working Together to Eliminate Avoidable Blindness

- 15 million fewer people are blind today than in 1999
- All 193 member states of the UN have committed to investing in eye care

Participating Organizations

- Eye care services, training of service providers, research, mentoring and administration are all programmatic needs at VISION 2020 cooperating institutions
- Information resources and staff skilled at providing and teaching access to and use of these information resources needed at all of the institutions
- Resource centers and their librarians are key players in this effort
- Barriers to finding and using eye care information resources in developing countries:
  • Cost of resources, connectivity, training
  • Lack of awareness of available resources
  • Librarians fail to utilize their knowledge & skills
  • Retention of librarians

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Global Sight Initiative

- Eight mentor eye hospitals sharing intervention strategies and systematic improvement processes with more than 50 client eye hospitals
- Goal: by 2015, 100 hospitals and 1 million more surgeries annually

Activities include:

- Advocacy
- Regional capacity building
- Formal training programs
- Advising & mentoring
- Local research
- Libraries & IT

Elsevier Foundation Innovative Libraries Grants

- Supports efforts of libraries to enhance the quality of life in developing countries
- One, two and three year grants
- Partnerships between libraries in developing and developed countries

Partners

Association of Vision Science Librarians (AVSL)

- 150 members in 26 countries around the globe
- Ophthalmology, optometry, hospital-based, companies, professional societies
- Established programs:
  • Share information and resources
  • Mentor new members
  • Advocate for increased access to information
- Provides expertise in vision-related information resources

Seva Foundation

- Seva: “Selfless Service” in Sanskrit
- Dedicated to the alleviation of suffering in the world
- Special focus on the prevention of blindness, helping 3 million people since 1978
  • Direct eye care services
  • Sustainable eye care programs
  • Center for Innovation in Eye Care
- Expertise and infrastructure for managing grant

VISION 2020: The Grant 2012-2014

Purpose:

- Expand the well-functioning vision library network
- Act at local, regional and global levels
- Advance VISION 2020 goals by adequacy and effectiveness of staff, resources and services at Resource Centers (RCs)

Activities focus on South-South, South-North and North-South cooperation:

- Teleconferences
- Email
- Regional and all-group workshops
- Mentorships

Participating Centers:

- India:
  • Aravind Eye Care System
  • LV Prasad Eye Institute
  • Sadguru Netra Chikitsalaya
  • Vivekananda Mission Asram Netra Nirmayam Niketan
- Guatemala:
  • Visualiza Eye Care System
- Nepal:
  • Lumbini Eye Institute
- Tanzania:
  • Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology
- Egypt:
  • Al Noor Magrabi Foundation

First 21 Months Actions:

- Assessments and work plans developed by each RC
- Teleconference with each RC’s librarian and administrators
- First regional workshop held at Aravind, November 2012
- All-center workshop held at LV Prasad, March 2013
- Promotion at American Library Assn, Medical Library Assn, American Public Health Assn, 2012 Science of Eliminating Health Disparities conferences
- Active mentoring established between each RC librarian and AVSL members

Goals for 2013-2014:

- Provide tailored training for each RC librarian
- Improve collections, cataloging and search capacity at each RC

References:

Seva: Taking on gender inequities in global blindness prevention and cure. Seva Foundation.

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American Academy of Optometry 2013