



PRESS RELEASE

Bausch + Lomb and Lions Clubs International Foundation Announce Research Grants to Help Fight Childhood Blindness

Eye Health Organizations in South Africa and Bangladesh Selected

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — The Pediatric Cataract Initiative (PCI), a collaboration between Bausch + Lomb, the global eye health company and Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) has awarded two research grants of US\$50,000 each for projects by ORBIS in South Africa and Zambia and The International Centre for Eye Health (ICEH) in Bangladesh for their work to reduce the prevalence of childhood blindness.

PCI grants are awarded to qualified organizations whose proposed projects will strengthen and expand treatment for preventable childhood blindness, particularly pediatric cataract. The PCI Global Advisory Council, which is composed of leading eye health experts from around the world, reviewed 14 small research grant applications from around the world including countries such as Hungary, Nigeria, Nepal, Malawi and New Zealand before ultimately choosing the projects of ORBIS and ICEH.

ORBIS is a nonprofit global development organization dedicated to saving sight worldwide. ORBIS will assess the pediatric cataract surgical service in Southern Africa, informing and enhancing existing activities to strengthen pediatric eye care units at Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital in South Africa and Kitwe Central Hospital in Zambia.

“Instead of only measuring our work through numbers of children who have cataract surgery, this grant will enable us to track the quality of surgical outcomes and factors affecting children’s access to services,” explained Dr. Larry Benjamin of ORBIS Southern Africa and chair of the ORBIS Europe, Middle East and Africa program and Medical Advisory Committee. “There is a narrow window of opportunity in which to correct visual deficits to prevent life-long visual disability or blindness.”

The International Centre for Eye Health (ICEH) in Bangladesh will lead a five-year community-based assessment of Bangladeshi children, evaluating outcomes of their cataract eye surgeries. The evaluation locations include Child Sight Foundation (CSF) Pediatric Ophthalmology Units.



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“I am very excited about this opportunity to look at longer term outcomes of cataract surgery in children in Bangladesh and to work with Child Slight Foundation (CSF),” said Dr. Richard Bowman of ICEH Bangladesh. “This work will build on my previous research on pediatric cataract in developing countries but also on the excellent research conducted on key informant identification of blind children in Bangladesh. The success of this method led to vastly increased numbers of children being operated for cataract and, five years since then, we now want to know how they are doing and whether similar levels of effort are required to achieve good visual and educational rehabilitation for these children.”

PCI Grants Making Progress:

Bausch + Lomb and Lions Clubs International Foundation awarded the first grants through PCI in December of 2010, and those inaugural grants are already having an impact. The first grant, to the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria, was used to fund one of the first large-scale studies of the root causes of childhood blindness in Africa. Field work was done in three districts and 18 local government areas to determine the prevalence of blindness and severe visual impairment in children in Cross River State.

Preliminary results of the study found nearly 250 children were either blind or had severely low vision. The effort has also referred nearly 650 children to the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital for various monocular and binocular problems which may require surgical treatment, including treatment for cataract, glaucoma and strabismus surgery as well as for spectacles and low vision aids.

The second grant, to the Lumbini Eye Institute in Nepal, was used to study the cost and clinical effectiveness of a comprehensive pediatric cataract surgery follow-up system in western Nepal and adjacent northern Indian states. This research continues to make good progress and is expected to release outcomes in the near future which may potentially have a wide-ranging effect on follow-up regimens in developing nations worldwide.

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About The Pediatric Cataract Initiative

Launched in June 2010, the Pediatric Cataract Initiative is the first dedicated global effort aimed at preventing and treating cataract – a clouding of the eye’s natural lens – in children so as to reduce childhood blindness. The Pediatric Cataract Initiative (www.PediatricCataract.org) utilizes the resources of both Bausch + Lomb and LCIF to identify, fund and promote innovative methods of overcoming this challenge for the long-term benefit of children, their families and their communities. For additional information, visit PediatricCataract.org.



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About Bausch + Lomb

Bausch + Lomb is one of the best-known and most respected healthcare companies in the world. Its core businesses include contact lenses and lens care products, ophthalmic surgical devices and instruments, and ophthalmic pharmaceuticals. Founded in 1853, the company is headquartered in Rochester, N.Y., and employs more than 10,000 people worldwide. Its products are available in more than 100 countries. More information is available at bausch.com.

About Lions Club International Foundation

Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) is the charitable arm of Lions Clubs International, the world's largest service club organization with more than 1.35 million members in 46,000 clubs in 208 countries and geographical areas around the world. LCIF was ranked by a Financial Times study as the #1 non-governmental organization with which to partner. Lions are well-known for their commitment to preventing blindness worldwide. Learn more at lcif.org.