Bausch + Lomb and Lions Clubs International Foundation Award US$150,000 Grant to Siliguri Greater Lions Eye Hospital

Funding Will Support First-of-its-Kind Program

Dedicated to Pediatric Cataract in West Bengal, India

ROCHESTER, NY — Bausch + Lomb, the global eye health company, and Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) have awarded the Siliguri Greater Lions Eye Hospital a US$150,000 grant to support a training and local capacity building initiative in West Bengal, India. The hospital will use the money for a dedicated early detection and treatment program for pediatric cataract and children’s eye health. The grant is made possible through the Pediatric Cataract Initiative (PCI), a collaborative between Bausch + Lomb and LCIF which identifies, funds and promotes innovative methods for overcoming visual impairments caused by pediatric cataracts and other pediatric eye disease.

The World Health Organization estimates that there are 1.4 million blind children in the world; of which 1 million live in Asia.1,2 India has the highest number of children with blindness. Childhood cataract -- congenital, traumatic or developmental -- is the most common treatable cause of childhood blindness, responsible for 10 to 30 percent of all childhood blindness.

The Siliguri Greater Lions Eye Hospital in Siliguri, West Bengal State, India, was chosen among a number of applicants in South Asia based on its comprehensive action plan. The capacity grant will provide training to local ophthalmologists, as well as education to local teachers, primary care givers and other community health workers to train how to accurately identify pediatric cataract and other eye disease in Jalpaiguri district, as well as follow-up care and low vision counseling. The hospital will also invest in new optical equipment and conduct a variety of outreach events in the area to screen 130,000 underserved children in West Bengal. The institution will also perform sight-restoring cataract surgery and long-term follow-up care for 200 children from Jalpaiguri district and neighboring states.

“Identifying children afflicted with pediatric cataract requires close partnership between community health officials and ophthalmologists because children often cannot realize or report when they have any visual problems,” said Kamalesh Guha, chief executive officer, Siliguri Greater Lions Eye Hospital. “This grant will make a huge difference in the lives of children afflicted with cataract and other eye disease, since there is no other dedicated child eye care service in North Bengal, India.”
“We’re pleased to provide the Siliguri Greater Lions Eye Hospital with funds that can help them realize their vision of a comprehensive outreach and training program to help reduce the prevalence of pediatric cataract,” said Joseph Barr, vice president, clinical and medical affairs at Bausch + Lomb. “This grant will continue the mission of PCI in India by bringing greater awareness, treatment and high-quality eye care services to this area of need.”

Proposals were collected through an invitation-only process focused solely on South Asia. The PCI Global Advisory Council, which is composed of leading eye health experts from around the world, reviewed grant applications received from nine institutions located in Nepal, Bangladesh and India before selecting the Siliguri Greater Lions Hospital in West Bengal, India.

“LCIF is proud to partner with Bausch + Lomb through the Pediatric Cataract Initiative. Together we are improving eye care for underserved children and their families,” said Wing-Kun Tam, chairperson of LCIF. "This grant will further improve the expertise and the quality of treatment that the facility is able to provide for local children who depend on us to ensure that they have the best sight possible."

PCI Grant Making Progress:

Earlier this year, PCI issued two US$50,000 small research grants. The first grant was awarded to ORBIS, a nonprofit global development organization, which is working to assess the pediatric cataract surgical service in Southern Africa. The findings will be used to influence development and operation of 10 new ORBIS pediatric eye care programs to be developed in Africa by 2020. The second grant, received by the International Centre for Eye Health (ICEH) based in London, is leading a five-year community-based assessment of Bangladeshi children, by evaluating outcomes of their cataract eye surgeries.

Tianjin Eye Hospital in China received the first PCI capacity-building grant from Bausch + Lomb and LCIF in May 2011. The capacity building grant funding has provided the hospital’s pediatric and cataract ophthalmologists with in-depth training on surgical techniques. To assist in detection, information sessions have been held to educate parents and other healthcare workers at satellite facilities on pediatric diseases. PCI support has also enabled the institution to purchase a new comprehensive database to improve the quality of cataract services, follow-up care and surgical outcomes.
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 PediatricCataractInitiative.org.

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, NY, and employs roughly 11,000 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.

REFERENCES

2. Visual impairment and blindness; Fact Sheet N°282 (June 2012), World Health Organization

###