

World Sight Day 2021

Novartis is working with partners around the world to help eliminate preventable visual impairment and blindness by reimagining access to eye care.

Oct 14, 2021

Many of us will experience some kind of eye health issue in our lifetime, but did you know that more than 1 billion people worldwide do not have access to the eye health care they need?¹

'With the appropriate access to treatment, the burden of vision impairment can be significantly reduced'. Regular eye checks can ensure the early detection and management of diseases that can lead to blindness, such as diabetic macular edema and wet AMD, and diagnose other eye conditions like amblyopia ("lazy eye") and presbyopia (age-related vision reduction). Eye examinations can even uncover other health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, and high blood pressure or cholesterol levels.²

To mark this year's World Sight Day, we are proud to again partner with the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness. Together, we are calling on everyone to #LoveYourEyes and pledge to have a sight test by visiting <https://www.iapb.org/world-sight-day/pledging-tool/>.

Better eye health can lead to broad-reaching benefits across a variety of socio-economic factors, including educational attainment and employment. Additionally, low quality of life and poverty are both a cause and a consequence of poor eye health, with 90% of visually impaired people living in low- and middle-income countries.¹ By leveraging our strong relationships with partners, we are committed to raising the standards for eye care in the developing world to help make eye care accessible for all.

At Novartis we're excited to be part of the solution to try and decrease visual impairment and the

burden this places on individuals and society around the globe.

Jill Hopkins, Senior Vice President and Global Development Head for Ophthalmology, Novartis

Learn more about the partnerships and initiatives that are bringing us closer to eliminating preventable blindness globally.

Building better eye health in Vietnam and the Philippines

In March 2021, and in partnership with The Fred Hollows Foundation (an international development organization working toward our shared goal to eliminate avoidable blindness), Novartis launched the Hope in Sight eye health program in Vietnam and the Philippines. Hope in Sight aims to not only educate the community on eye diseases but also improve access to eye health services. The program is being rolled out through online and offline initiatives such as banners, SMS blasts, TV and radio ads, and in-person events.

In nine out of 10 cases, blindness and vision impairment can be avoided when addressed and treated early. But it all starts with educating people. We can drastically reduce the chances of someone going blind if they have the right eye health knowledge and get their eyes tested regularly. Our campaign will reach thousands of people and encourage them to take better care of their eyes.

Dr. Phuc Huynh Tan, director of program implementation in Asia, The Fred Hollows Foundation

Partnering to expand eye services in India

The Novartis goal to expand access to eye care extends to India, where we partner with Aravind Eye Care System on a range of initiatives to help eliminate preventable blindness. These initiatives include research and development to improve disease detection in vision care centers, expansion of eye services, capability building and health education programs.

Realizing the vision of nonprofit initiatives striving to improve eye care

The Novartis eXcellence in Ophthalmology Vision Awards (XOVA) program provides funding for non-profit initiatives that strive to make improvements in the field of eye care. Each year, up to USD 500 000 is made available to fund up to 10 awards for programs that are working to deliver sustainable, improved eye care to help reduce the burden of blindness worldwide.

Since its launch over a decade ago, XOVA has funded 67 projects across 29 countries around the world, and over the past four years alone, more than 1 million people have benefited from increased access to eye care thanks to XOVA initiatives.

With the grant, we went from serving around 30 000 patients to 40 000 patients, and doubled the number of surgeries. We could not have achieved this without the support of the XOVA grant.

Dr Théophile Tuyisabe, ophthalmologist at Kabgayi Hospital, Rwanda, and XOVA grant recipient

Recent XOVA grant recipients include a program to improve the skills of ophthalmologists treating glaucoma patients in Ethiopia and Mozambique; a project to integrate diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma screening services into existing primary care centers in Bangladesh; and an initiative that provides screening services to diabetic patients in Brazil who otherwise would not have access to proper eye care.

Connecting patients and ophthalmologists in Côte d'Ivoire

In autumn 2021, Novartis launched the All For Sight digital platform for ophthalmologists in Côte d'Ivoire, aiming to allow ophthalmologists to track disease progression by collecting real-time, self-reported data directly from consenting patients. The app hosts an abundance of educational content, including an eye pathology dictionary to inform and sensitize patients, and can also be used to manage appointments, digitally monitor patient records, and facilitate exchanges between patients and doctors via an online discussion forum.

Restoring vision and hope to thousands in Southeast Asia

Eyesight initiatives are restoring vision – and hope – to thousands of people in Southeast Asia by expanding equitable access to eye care.

[Read More](#)

References:

1. IAPB. Vision Atlas. Accessed September 22, 2021. <https://www.iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas>
 2. AAO. 20 Surprising Health Problems an Eye Exam Can Catch. Accessed September 22, 2021. <https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/surprising-health-conditions-eye-exam-detects>
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List of links present in page

1. <https://prod1.novartis.com/news/world-sight-day-2021>
2. <https://www.iapb.org/world-sight-day/pledging-tool/>
3. <https://prod1.novartis.com/stories/restoring-vision-and-hope-thousands-southeast-asia>
4. <https://www.iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas>
5. <https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/surprising-health-conditions-eye-exam-detects>