ICO FELLOWSHIPS 2001-2016
A 15-YEAR SUCCESS STORY

BUILDING A WORLD ALLIANCE FOR SIGHT

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF OPHTHALMOLOGY
Greetings

The ICO Fellowships Program is an educational initiative of the International Council of Ophthalmology. It was organized to support promising young ophthalmologists from developing countries to improve their practical skills and broaden their perspectives in Ophthalmology during either a three-months or a one-year stay. Fellows are expected to take the acquired knowledge and skills back to their home countries and take part in programs such as VISION 2020.

My name is Berthold Seitz and I am a Cornea Specialist. Since 2006, I am the Chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology, Saarland University Medical Center in Homburg/Saar, Germany. In February 2016, I took over as Director of the ICO Fellowship program from Prof. Dr. Peter Gabel after the World Ophthalmology Congress (WOC 2016) in Guadalajara, Mexico. Cordula Gabel-Obermaier will continue serving as Executive for ICO Fellowships, and she is supporting me well with her vast experience (e-mail: fellowship@icoph.org).

From 1989 to 2004, I had the chance and honor to work in the team of the former ICO World President Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Gottfried O. H. (“Fritz”) Naumann in Erlangen/Bavaria/Germany. In 2001 we hosted the first three Chinese ICO fellows who neither spoke German nor English at that time. Nevertheless, this was the starting point of an international success story.

Thanks to substantial activities of hosts and sponsors we are able to contribute to enhancing eyecare delivery in developing countries around the world. With the help of our generous and committed cooperation partners, the ICO Fellowships Program has developed to be one of the most sustainable programs to preserve vision and prevent blindness in poor countries.

For me it is an honor and a pleasure to start my contribution as Director to this wonderful program right at its 15th birthday.

Yours,

B. Seitz

Prof. Dr. Berthold Seitz ML, FEBO
Director ICO Fellowships

Saarland University Medical Center, Homburg/Saar
In 1991 Peter Gabel was chosen chairman of the newly established Eye Hospital at the University in Regensburg. In 1996 he co-founded the scientific study group for artificial retina prosthesis, which was later transferred to „Retina Implant AG“. He is still chairman of its scientific advisory board. During his chairmanship he became an important ICO Fellowships Host, especially for vitreoretinal surgeons.

After retirement from the University he was elected to the ICO Board and served as Director for ICO Fellowships. Under his guidance the program flourished to an indispensable educational program for ophthalmologists from developing countries. New types of Fellowships could be implemented such as the Ocular Pathology and Microbiology Fellowship and the Retinoblastoma Fellowship.

Subsequently, he was successful at bringing new and highly committee supporters on board such as the Eye Cancer Foundation (New York), the AIER Eye Hospital Group, Ltd. (China) and the Kinder Augen Krebs Stiftung (Bonn).

„I strongly feel that not only the guest Fellows benefit from these exchanges, but the entire hosting staff is rewarded by both the professional and social interaction. The resulting long-standing professional and personal friendships contribute to long-term benefits on both sides.

I wish the ICO Fellowships Program a continuous flourishing. Happy Birthday!“

Prof. Dr. Peter Gabel - Past Director for ICO Fellowships
Intimacy with the financial situation of ICO/IFOS let me propose at the ICO Meeting in Jerusalem May 20th 2000 that ICO should use at least a part of its accumulated fortune to launch an IFOS/ICO-Fellowships Program to support promising young ophthalmologists from developing countries to improve their practical skills and broaden their views in ophthalmology.

Substantial help by Nag Rao and Peter Watson to word the regulations in the beginning and the support by Jean-Jacques DeLaey, Pran Nagpal, Gottfried Naumann and Bruce Spivey in the phase of implementation were most appreciated. Then about forty Department Chairmen were found in Europe, India and America willing to host Fellows offering special opportunities. This allowed a perfect start.

From 2000 to 2006 the Fellowships Program together with Treasury of IFOS/ICO became a full time job for me as a retired Professor - with qualified secretarial help by Eliane Baer. Until 2006, 208 Fellows had been awarded.

That Peter Gabel and his daughter Cordula Gabel-Obermaier were elected to develop the Fellowships Program proved to be a very good choice. I am convinced that the same applies for the election of Berthold Seitz having taken over in 2016.

Prof. Dr. Balder Gloor - Past Director of ICO Fellowships 1994-2006 ICO Treasurer
Cordula was born in 1968 in Munich, Germany, where she still lives with her family. She does not have a medical background but she looks back on a long working-experience in administration and finances.

Since 2009 Cordula Gabel-Obermaier is Executive in charge of the ICO Fellowships Program and she is the only staff member running the ICO Fellowships Program from her home-office. One of her personal strengths is to look after every candidate and later ICO Fellow individually, providing her/him with support from application to training and until evaluation after the training.

„I love working for the ICO Fellowships Program, it is interesting to support personalities from all over the world, from all different cultures! It is exciting for me to know that our work has such a direct and sustainable impact on the lives of so many people and their families!

Any time I have the chance to personally meet the ICO Fellows at an international meeting or those who come to the Training Center at Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich, I enjoy talking to them and exchanging experiences. I will give my best to make the Program grow further and to help enhancing the awareness of the importance of blindness prevention worldwide.“

Cordula Gabel-Obermaier - ICO Executive for Fellowships
The ICO Fellowships program started off 15 years ago as a good idea and it has grown to be an outstandingly successful, high-profile program that has increased the skills and proficiency of nearly 1000 ICO Fellows from around the world. There is much competition for these very prestigious Fellowships that enable the Fellows to spend time with the world’s leaders in ophthalmology.

We also need to recognise the tremendous contribution made by these leaders in the host institutions who make their time and patients available for the Fellows. Without them the program would cease to function.

As President of the ICO I receive a report from nearly every Fellow detailing what they have done and learnt. It is clear from these reports that they have had a marvellous experience and that they are excited at the prospective of returning home, using their new skills to help their patients, but particularly passing on their new knowledge to their colleagues and students.

We work hard to raise the funds to be able to continue to fund more ICO Fellowships and I do want to thank and congratulate Balder Gloor and Peter Gabel for their great work over the past years, Cordula Gabel-Obermaier and Berthold Seitz who run the program at the moment, the ICO Fellowships Host institutions, and particularly the ICO Fellows themselves.

Prof. Dr. Hugh R. Taylor – ICO President
The ICO Fellowships Program celebrates 15 years of remarkable service to bright young ophthalmologists and their societies from around the world! Through an extraordinary network of international ICO Fellowship training centers and dedicated supervisors, 948 eye surgeons from developing countries have returned home with new knowledge and skills. The experiences have been transformative for trainee and host alike, with many lasting friendships.

We are grateful to all of our generous supporters and extremely proud of our ICO Fellows - their commitment to improving local care continues to inspire!

Congratulations to Prof. Dr. Peter Gabel for his leadership and Cordula Gabel-Obermaier for her dedication over many years. Under ICO Fellowship Director, Prof. Dr. Berthold Seitz, we look forward to continued success and exciting new milestones.

Many congratulations!

Prof. Dr. Neeru Gupta - ICO Vice President
At a meeting of the International Council of Ophthalmology in 2000 in Jerusalem, ICO Treasurer Balder Gloor proposed that the ICO spend some of its accumulated savings on offering three-months Fellowships to ophthalmologists from developing countries. To be frank, there was some skepticism on the Council about how the ICO could manage such a program. But it asked a group composed of Balder Gloor, Nag Rao, Mark Tso, and Ron Smith to come back with some recommendations.

Since 2001, close to 1000 ophthalmologists have spent three months or longer in many of the leading eye institutes and departments in the world learning about the subspecialties of ophthalmology and building lasting relationships with their Hosts. The stated purpose has always been for the Fellows to bring the acquired knowledge and skills back to their home countries and take part in programs to preserve vision and prevent blindness.

Peter Gabel, who succeeded Balder Gloor as ICO Director for Fellowships, once suggested that ICO Programs should be evaluated based on "how many people they help to see better." By that measure, the ICO Fellowships have had a direct, profound and lasting impact.

It is a great pleasure to meet ophthalmology leaders in low and middle resource countries who describe the impact that an ICO Fellowship had on their careers. Sincere thanks are due to the Hosts, to Balder, Peter, and their successor Berthold Seitz, but particularly to Cordula, who has served as the nurturing "Mom" for hundreds of Fellows in the last 8 years. It is wonderful to observe how ICO Fellows help people to see better.

William „Bill“ Felch - ICO Chief Executive Officer
The ICO Staff really enjoys the opportunity to meet ICO Fellowship alumni and learn what they are doing now. We are very pleased that the ICO Fellow Facebook page has been very active. We would like to involve ICO Fellowship alumni in more activities within the ICO, and we feel very proud of all the achievements by the alumni. We encourage alumni to communicate on a regular basis, especially with Cordula, who does an outstanding job of overseeing the Fellowships Program.

Kathleen Miller - ICO Executive Director

I have worked at the ICO for almost ten years and during this time I have seen the Fellowships Program grow and thrive. This is due to the hard work and dedication of the Fellowships Directors and the Fellowships Executive, Ms. Cordula Gabel-Obermaier. In traveling to many meetings throughout the world over the years, it is clear that the Fellowships Program is well known and highly regarded by ophthalmologists everywhere. The ICO is proud to have the Fellowships Program as one of its flagship programs and support the important goal of enhancing ophthalmic education.

Lindsey Washburn - ICO Director of Partnerships and Administration
Hanfi Azfar Nafees Alam from Pakistan was trained in Glaucoma at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai under supervision of Prof. Robert Ritch

ICO Fellows in Munich in 2010: Fredrick Kagondu, Kenya, Sadia Sethi, Pakistan, Angshuman Das, India, Moustafa Momen, Egypt

Prof. Gabel, Jason Pituwa Nirwoth, Congo, Freddy Mbumba, Uganda, Prof. Seitz, Alexis Kahindo, Congo, at the Host-Fellow-Reunion during the WOC in Guadalajara/Mexico 2016

Prof. Francesco Bandello from Milan congratulates ICO Fellow Alam Mumtaz from Pakistan who was trained in Vitreoretina
The International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) began running examinations for eye doctors in 1995. Since that time over 22,000 doctors have taken and passed the examinations and those numbers continue to increase. Such is the popularity of ICO examinations that different components have evolved over the years: from the Foundation Assessment for trainees who have just started in ophthalmology, to the Standard Examination consisting of Basic Sciences, Optics and Refraction and Clinical Sciences and from there to the Advanced Examination for those who have completed at least 4 years of residency. The ICO is also just starting an online subspecialty examination in cornea and anterior segment that will eventually expand to include all the subspecialties. It is expected that from 2018, all ICO examinations will be run online.

One of the major reasons for ophthalmologists taking ICO examinations is to facilitate the ability to apply for ICO Fellowships. These are opportunities for ophthalmologists from developing countries to spend some time at specialist centres around the world. There they can study by observation and practical experience, skills that they may otherwise not be able to learn at home. They can then export those skills for the benefit of their home country.

Sadly, due to the enormous demands for ICO Fellowships around the world, there are not enough funds available for everyone who desires a Fellowship. There is, therefore, a necessary selection process for applicants to go through. In order to gain success for an ICO Fellowships, ophthalmologists have to achieve a certain number of points that may be awarded based on the applicant’s previous experience and abilities. In addition, ophthalmologists are also able to accumulate vital points necessary by successfully passing any ICO examinations. Extra points can also be acquired for high scoring candidates achieving merits and distinctions in the individual examinations.
There is always interest from ophthalmologists around the world for the ICO Examinations and Fellowships, which have an interdependent special relationship.

Both enhance the learning of clinical skills as well as nurturing friendship and professional companionship to the benefit of both ophthalmologists and their patients. The ICO wishes to heighten these benefits and encourage more people to apply for both activities that undoubtedly remain inextricably linked together.

Simon Keightley, FRCS, FRCOphth - ICO Director for Examinations

Nicola Quilter, Examinations Executive for the ICO, has been in post now for eight years. Previously working for the British Royal family and studying Religious education at Open University, Nicola with her team has developed the examinations systems, running worldwide in over 80 countries, 132 examinations centres.

In recent years, implementation of the Advanced examination, Foundation assessments and plans to introduce the sub-specialty exams in the next year, have increased the popularity of the examinations, working closely with the ICO Fellowships Program to offer a learning and evaluation platform.

Since their inception in 1995, trainees have applied and passed the examinations and have moved on to applying for an ICO Fellowship. With successful trainees building on their knowledge, connections, and friendships, the Exams and Fellowships Program are very closely linked and, therefore, the importance of developing the two programs together is essential. Congratulations to Cordula Gabel-Obermaier, Prof. Berthold Seitz and the Fellowships team.

Nicola Quilter - ICO Executive for Examinations
What is the ICO Fellowships Program?

The ICO Fellowship Program works to support the VISION 2020 initiative, which is a global initiative of World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) that aimed to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020.

The ICO Fellowships Program helps promising young ophthalmologists from developing countries improve their practical skills and broaden their perspectives in ophthalmology. Fellows are expected to bring the acquired knowledge and skills back to their home countries and take part in programs to preserve vision and prevent blindness.

Since the ICO Fellowships Program started in 2001, more than 920 ICO Fellows have completed their three months subspeciality training and 28 ICO Fellows have completed their one year training.

The ICO Fellowships Program offers subspecialty training over three months, six months (new!) and one year.

Main Criteria for a selection of ICO Fellowship awardees are:

- Specialist exam
- High relevance for home institute
- ICO membership of national societies
- Application performance
- High motivation
- Consideration of ICO exams
- Regional balance
- Preferably from teaching / public services positions

Assessment and selection through our team of experts in a four-steps review process

* Prof. Dr. Berthold Seitz
* Prof. Dr. Peter Gabel
* Prof. Dr. Jean-Jacques DeLaey
* Regional Experts who live in the region where the candidates come from and thus know well the local needs in eyecare delivery
I had the privilege of being associated by Prof. Balder Gloor to the ICO Fellowships Program from the very start. I also had the pleasure of hosting more than 30 Fellows from different parts of the world.

The ICO Fellowships Program is indeed not only important for young ophthalmologists from developing countries - but also for the departments which accept them.

I was impressed by the ICO Fellows' eagerness to learn, their motivation and their open-mindedness. They often stimulated my own residents. The ICO Fellowships Program has become one of the cornerstones of the educational efforts of the ICO.

Prof. Dr. Jean-Jacques DeLaey, Ghent, Belgium
I believe the best way to learn something and to make progress is to understand own levels and to see what to achieve. In my experience I have learned most in a different clinic abroad in a short time, rather than in my own clinic in a long time.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly believe the ICO Fellowships Program can create this magical touch, this big momentum in young ophthalmologists’ career.

Since I have started to serve on the Board of ICO Fellowships Committee I have witnessed many times this magical change to become true, and feel very proud of the immense changes Fellows created in their home countries upon returning back.

The ICO Fellowships Program creates a „butterfly effect” in young doctors’ personal and professional lives as well as in their colleagues’ life and their patients’ eye health.

Prof. Dr. Pinar Aydin - PhD, Ankara, Turkey
Supporting young African ophthalmologists in developing subspecialty interest, knowledge and skills is one of the most relevant interventions in a rapidly changing health care and socio-economic environment.

Linking personal professional growth with institutional capacity development helps effectively reducing brain drain by attracting the best candidates, developing career perspectives and getting high quality services to the many African people in need.

Traveling all over the continent, it is one of the most rewarding experiences to meet the many young and aspiring ICO Fellows, who prove the case in their daily work and action – several of them now in senior positions and well respected experts in their own rights.

Serving as a member of the ICO Fellowships Committee and being actively involved with the implementation of the ICO Fellowships Program in Africa is a great privilege and I hope many more fellows will make good use of this fantastic opportunity.

Prof. Dr. K. H. Martin Kollmann
Senior Advisor for Neglected Tropical Diseases CBM Central Africa Regional Office - ICO Sponsor
## Overview on ICO Fellowship Opportunities

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Fellowship Program</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Grant</th>
<th>Since</th>
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<tr>
<td>ICO Three Months Fellowship</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>max. US$ 6000</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICO Sandwich Fellowship Program (*)</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>max. US$ 6000</td>
<td>2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICO RRF Helmerich Fellowship</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>US$ 25000</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICO Fred Hollows Foundation Fellowship</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>US$ 24000</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICO-ECF Six Months Retinoblastoma Fellowship</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>US$ 6000 + Flight</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICO-NEI One Month Genetics Fellowship</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>as topping to the Retinoblastoma Fellowship</td>
<td>2016</td>
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</table>

All ICO Fellowship opportunities are open to young ophthalmologists from developing countries who wish to undergo subspeciality training at internationally recognized ICO Training Centers to improve their practical skills and broaden their perspectives of ophthalmology. ICO Fellows are especially committed to enhancing ophthalmic education and patient care in their home countries. Acquired skills and knowledges are being taught to the colleagues in the home institute.

(*) The ICO Sandwich Fellowships Program is an addition to the ICO Three Months Fellowships Program in which Hosts visit the Fellow’s home clinic 1-2 years after completion of the Fellow’s first stay to find out where the Fellow may need special support. ICO Fellows then return to the Host clinics for another three months training to meet these individual needs. Another 1-2 years later the Hosts visit again the Fellow’s institutes to enhance ongoing cooperation. ICO Hosts suggest exceptional Fellows for this program.
It is a great pleasure to announce a partnership between The Eye Cancer Foundation (ECF) and the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO). It is our mutual goal to decrease the high rates of world-wide mortality associated with the most common primary childhood eye cancer, retinoblastoma. Towards this goal, we agree that supplying subspecialty-trained retinoblastoma specialists to unserved and underserved countries is our priority.

Retinoblastoma affects approximately 8,200 children each year and most of them will die of their disease because they are not diagnosed or treated before they develop metastatic disease. In contrast, there exists a better than 96% survival rate in developed countries in North America and Europe.

We know that early diagnosis and prompt treatment will save lives. In countries without eye cancer specialists, children with retinoblastoma typically go undiagnosed and untreated until it is too late. Even if children have local general ophthalmologists, these eye doctors are not usually familiar with modern eye cancer medicine.

Having at least one person dedicated to fighting retinoblastoma allows for the development of hospital-based screening programs. Together, The Eye Cancer Foundation and the International Council of Ophthalmology have set a goal of saving 1,000 children by 2020. We invite you to join us!

The Eye Cancer Foundation is looking forward to a long and productive relationship with the International Council of Ophthalmology!

Paul T. Finger, MD, FACS
Director, The Eye Cancer Foundation ECF
The National Eye Institute (NEI) is developing a joint NEI-ICO partnership to train individuals from middle-low resources countries interested in ocular genetics. The NEI is a component of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, NIH, a principal Federal agency that conducts and supports biomedical research.

The mission of NEI is to protect and promote eye health, and to improve the vision of people through research. NEI research spans the range of basic discovery, translational and clinical research. The overall goal of the research is to prevent, reduce visual impairment and develop treatments for eye disease and vision disorders.

The Ophthalmic Genetics Branch NEI conducts basic discovery research and clinical research to develop treatment for heritable ocular disorders. The scope of the discovery research ranges from developmental, genetics, molecular and cellular aspects of ocular biology in health and disease. Understanding the genes, genetic network and biological processes should inform rational therapeutic development and interventions to slow or reverse disease progression.

The Branch has a team of skilled physician scientists, molecular geneticists, genetic counselors and technologists. Resources in the Branch include genetic diagnostic tools and an impressive database of patients with fully characterized phenotypes on a host of heritable ocular disorders. This is a vibrant research and training environment for the Joint NEI-ICO Genetics Fellow.

Dr. Belinda Seto, Deputy Director of the National Eye Institute
NEI, Bethesda, MD, USA
ICO Fellowships in Eye Pathology/Microbiology

Eye Pathology is the study of diseases affecting the eye and ocular adnexa, including congenital abnormalities, infectious diseases, metabolic abnormalities, as well as neoplasms.

It involves the understanding of specimen workup and analysis, using traditional morphological examinations as well as molecular genetic analyses, in order to provide a definitive diagnosis and in some cases prognostic information.

This fellowship is for those ophthalmologists in training who have an interest in eye pathology and related research. It is also directed to pathologists (either in training or consultants) who would like to intensify their knowledge of eye pathology. Those interested should contact the centre of interest for any further details, and complete the required form online.

The following Hosts take part in this novel program:

1. **LV Prasad Eye Institute** has a network of hospitals within India with active laboratory services in two centres i.e., LVPEI-Hyderabad and LVPEI Bhubaneswar. Dr. Savitri Sharma is the Director of the Laboratory Services of the LVPEI network (savitri@lvpei.org).

2. **The Eye Pathology Department, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.** Denmark is one of the five countries in Scandinavia and there are 6 million inhabitants. The laboratory is directed by Prof. Steffen Heegaard MD (sthe@sund.ku.dk), who is also the co-director of the corneal and oculoplastic services.
3. The L.F. Montgomery Laboratory at the Emory Eye Center, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia is one of the few major ophthalmic laboratories in the United States.

The laboratory is directed by Prof. Hans E. Grossiklaus, MD (ophtheg@emory.edu), who is also the Director of the ocular oncology service.

The laboratory evaluates 2,000 to 2,500 surgical ophthalmic pathology specimens per year, as well as approximately 500 experimental pathology specimens. The majority of the surgical specimens are related to ocular oncology.

4. The Eye Pathology Service at the Royal Liverpool University Hospital is located in Liverpool, UK, and works closely with St Pauls’s Eye Unit and the Liverpool Ocular Oncology Centre (LOOC) in the Royal Liverpool University Hospital (RLBUHT). It is led by Prof. Sarah E. Coupland (s.e.coupland@liverpool.ac.uk), who also is head of the Liverpool Ocular Oncology Research Group (LOORG) (www.LOORG.org).

The Eye Pathology Service is embedded within the overarching multidisciplinary NHS „Liverpool Clinical Laboratories“ Pathology service (http://www.Liverpoolcl.nhs.uk), led by Dr. James Anson. The latter is also medical microbiologist and virologist and leads the Microbiology service at the RLBUHT (http://www.liverpoolcl.nhs.uk/infection-and.immunity/).
Thanks to an increasing awareness of the efficiency and benefits of the ICO Fellowships Program among hosts and young promising ophthalmologists in developing countries and sponsors we are still able to increase the number of ICO Fellowship Awards.
Funding sources of the ICO Fellowships Program

3-months fellowships only

* estimated for 2016
Subspecialties offered by the ICO Fellowships Program 2001-2016

- 23% Surgical Vitreoretina
- 15% Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus
- 12% Cornea and External Diseases
- 9% Glaucoma
- 9% Medical Retina
- 9% Oculoplastics
- 8% Cataract Surgery
- 3% Ocular Oncology
- 3% Uveitis
- 2% Neuroophthalmology
- 2% Community Eye Health
- 2% General Ophthalmology
- 1% Comprehensive Ophthalmology
- 1% Retinoblastoma
- 0.5% Ocular Pathology
- 0.5% Low Vision and Rehabilitation
ICO Fellowships Application Process

- Learn about the ICO Fellowships Program on www.icoph.org/fellows
- Choice of home country and Fellowship duration
- Display of opportunities
- Online form with selection of subspecialty

**Candidate**

- Submission for eligibility review
- Admission to Directory of Training Centers
- Request to favorite host
- Acceptance and proposed start date
- Submission for experts' review and funding decision
- Award letter / Money transfer
- Report / Appreciation letter
- Evaluation requests

**Fellowship Executive**

**Host**

**Fellowship Board**
928 ICO Fellows from 83 developing countries (2001-2016)

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<th>Region</th>
<th>Fellows</th>
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<td>South and Middle America</td>
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928 ICO Fellowships Hosts from 35 developed countries (2001-2016)

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198 ICO Fellows trained in Germany (2001-2016)
Why do we need the ICO Fellowships Program?

Avoidable blindness is one of the most prevalent and at the same time most neglected global problems because it has major effects not only on the life of the individual, but also on the life of their families and their communities.

Especially in developing countries there are many underserved regions where access to eyecare delivery is restricted. Most ophthalmologists are based in the bigger cities and people living in the rural areas suffer from an immense shortage in eyecare delivery. At the same time eyes are exposed to simple but often dangerous environmental impacts such as dust, solar radiation, fire and insects.

Culturally, there is often a stigma associated with blindness, further alienating the afflicted from their communities. Social disadvantages are also enormous: 50% of the blind in impoverished countries report a loss of social standing and decision-making authority, and 80% of blind women note a loss of authority within their families.

The impact of blindness and poor vision on quality of life is particularly alarming for those living in poverty. Approximately 45 million people in the world are blind, and 87% of visually impaired people live in developing countries.

The economic consequences of blindness are staggering, as 90% of blind individuals cannot work. Thus, poverty and blindness are believed to be intimately linked, with poverty predisposing to blindness, and blindness exacerbating poverty by limiting employment opportunities, or by incurring treatment cost. Impoverished people are more likely to become blind due to lack of access to health services. They also tend to be more susceptible to eye infections and diseases, and lack of awareness about eye health.

Why do we need the ICO Fellowships Program?

One example is the Maniema region in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the context of Vision 2020 (by Dr. Charles Umesumba, ophthalmologist from Kivu, Congo).

The Democratic Republic of Congo is a rich country in terms of natural resources. However, the population is very poor. The World Bank has rated DR Congo among the countries with the lowest income worldwide.

Only 3% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is spent to maintain the health sector. The health facilities are poorly equipped and the infrastructure and medical education is weak. The population's average life expectancy is 53 years and 21% of the children die being younger than 5 years old. 16% of the population cannot read and write.

80% of the country's ophthalmologists are based in the capital city and in main cities. The prevalence of blindness is estimated at 1.2% with these being the targeted blinding diseases:

Cataract: 50%, Glaucoma: 15%, Refractive errors: 10%, Onchocerchiasis (= River Blindness): 10%, Trachoma and other diseases: 9%, Childhood blindness: 5%, Diabetic retinopathy: 1%
The story of a blind patient with bilateral mature cataract at „Centre de Soins Oculaires Celpa-Kindu“ Kindu Eye Clinic
On the way to the outreach camp

...on River Congo

...preparing the rented car from WHO

...or using an UN-helicopter

...finally performing surgery
The ICO Fellowships Program is a springboard for promising and ambitious young ophthalmologists from developing countries. Our Fellows have well advanced in their careers after they enjoyed training at the very busy Department of Ophthalmology at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai:

- Dr. Wisam Shihadeh is Chairman, Dept. of Ophthalmology, and Dean, King Abdullah Hospital, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan
- Dr. Chun Zhang is Clinical Professor at Peking University Eye Center, Director at Stem Cell Center and Chief at Dept. of Research Administration
- Dr. Olusola Olawoye is Assistant Professor, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

The experiences during the three-months stay are overwhelmingly positive from both perspectives of Fellows and Hosts. In our busy Department of Ophthalmology all phases of learning are emphasized.

This goes from examining patients to local society meetings and visiting professor lectures. The first thing we make sure is that they have a notebook or iPad to take notes and write down everything that they see and experience. It’s surprising that not everyone thinks of this.

**Happy Birthday ICO Fellowships Program!**

Prof. Dr. Robert “Bob” Ritch
Shelley and Steven Einhorn Distinguished Professor,
New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai, New York, NY,
USA - ICO Host
It was always a pleasure for me and my team to take part in the ICO Fellowships Program. The University Eye Department in Göttingen (see www.augenklinik-goettingen.de) can offer observation and assistance in anterior segment, posterior segment, strabismus, orbital and oculoplastic surgery. The surgical spectrum of our team (Prof. Schittkowski, Prof. Feltgen, Dr. Bahlmann, PD Dr. van Oterendorp, Dr. Callizo, Dr. Naxer) include a variety of methods, e.g. PKP, DMEK, trabeculectomy, trabeculotomy using the trabectome, drainage implants, phaco, secondary IOL fixation, iris prosthesis, conventional buckling surgery, 20, 23 and 25 G vitrectomy, complex lid surgery, orbital decompression and anophthalmos procedures using orbital expanders.

Our eye department is located with its outpatient service in the main building and the hospital including 50 beds and 3 operating rooms is located in an external building (Hainbergklinik) close to the historic city center of Göttingen.

Our main focus in clinical research is multimodal imaging and treatment of vitreoretinal diseases, especially retinal vascular diseases, imaging of aqueous humor outflow pathways and wound healing in glaucoma surgery. Our experimental focus is the investigation of sensory processing in the retina in our own laboratory under the leadership of Prof. Gollisch (see www.retina.uni-goettingen.de). In the last years we had the opportunity to host several ICO Fellows and it was always a great and enriching experience for us.

With kind regards and the best wishes to the ICO Fellowships Program for the next 15 years to come.

Prof. Dr. Hans Hoerauf, University Eye Hospital, Göttingen, Germany - ICO Host
Participating in the ICO Fellowships Program has always been a very rewarding experience.

I am constantly impressed with these bright, enthusiastic young ophthalmologists from developing countries who have been very academically productive during their fellowships.

Watching these individuals grow into leaders after their experience, highlights the importance of this program in their professional development and makes me proud to be part of this wonderful organization.

Prof. Dr. Roberto Pineda, Cornea Specialist at Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Boston, MA, USA - ICO Host

I love working with these young, enthusiastic physicians. I believe the ICO is making a major difference in developing countries!

Prof. Dr. Neil R. Miller, Chairman of the Neuro-Ophthalmology Department at Wilmer School of Medicine at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, USA - ICO Host
Personally and through the Eye Department, University of Munich, Germany I have a long standing experience with ICO Fellows and the ICO Fellowships Program - as Host and as mentor of a great number of Fellows. Still I am enthusiastic about the Program for the following reasons:

- the Program offers young ophthalmologists from around the world the opportunity to get in contact with colleagues, services, and research activities in other countries, environments and cultures. In particular I am thinking of young colleagues from the developing world who otherwise may not have an opportunity to travel and see how eye care is practiced in other parts of the world. The exchange north-south and south-south, in particular with India as host country is extremely valuable.

- ICO Sandwich Fellowships: when it comes to surgery and research it is of great importance that the Host visits the place of work of her/his Fellow to be able to assist with surgery under the local conditions and supports the research activities.

- network building: to me ICO Fellowships are not only about individual partnership but also about network building between institutions – like Munich has a 38-year partnership with the Eye Department, University of Nairobi/Kenya, Scientific Societies, Colleges to guarantee a long standing partnership irrespective of individuals.

- friendship: ICO Fellowships offer a wonderful tool to build international, long lasting friendships in the ophthalmic world.

Congratulations for the succes of the Program so far and best wishes for a great future with ever growing numbers of Fellows. And thanks a lot to all those who have been involved as planners, managers, Hosts and in particular to Prof. Gloor, Prof. Gabel, Prof. Seitz and Ms. Cordula Gabel-Obermaier who have given so much!

Prof. Dr. Volker Klauss, Dept. of Ophthalmology at Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich, Germany
ICO Host and Mentor
During the last twenty years I have been actively involved in ophthalmological training programs run in Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea), Eastern Europe (Lithuania, Czech Republic, Croatia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Moldovia, Russia) and Asia (Pakistan, India, China). In all these countries I found severe deficits concerning my subspecialty, pediatric ophthalmology and strabismus. But there were also many young eye doctors, wanting to specialize in this field.

For these I strongly recommended to apply for an ICO Fellowship during the last 15 years, contributing a little bit to an adequate application pool of candidates. More than 15 colleagues have successfully applied and I still follow them during courses I still give in their home countries after my retirement 10 years ago. It is a real pleasure to see how they improved their clinical performance and have acquired high standards in diagnosis and treatment.

Prof. Dr. Peter Boergen, former Head of Dept. of Pediatric Ophthalmology at Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich, Germany - ICO Host
The ICO Fellowships Program represents a splendid experience for all of us here at San Raffaele. Since we joined the program 10 years ago, we met friends from all over the world and we sincerely hope that the experience for them was as fruitful and enriching as it was for us.

Ophthalmology has no borders and we would like to continue in the effort to transfer what we know to our colleagues in the hope that this will help people who are unlucky in some places far away from Europe.

Prof. Dr. Francesco Bandello, FEBO
Chairman, Department of Ophthalmology, University Vita-Salute, Scientific Institute San Raffaele, Milano, Italy - ICO Host
Nothing can reveal more of the impact a solid organization can make on a global scale. It is development in its very essence. In a nutshell, what I most sincerely appreciate about the Program is how it "enables". I used to be a Trainee and I am now an ICO Trainer.

I am doing my best so that my current trainees will be trainers soon.

Siamak Zarei-Ghanavati, MD, MS, FICO
Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Khatam-al-Anbia Eye Hospital Mashhad, Iran
former ICO Fellow, now ICO Host

Your generosity will make a very big impact in the life of 15 million people since I’m the first in Mali that has received training in oculoplastics.

Your help will greatly influence the care of patients. I’m very happy and confident despite the immensity of my mission.

Dr. Guirou Nouhoum from Mali served an ICO Fellowship Training in Oculoplastic Surgery at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai under supervision of Dr. David Della Rocca.
When I sent my application to the International Council of Ophthalmology I chose the Fellowship training under the supervision of Professor Yuichiro Ogura.

Japan has attracted me by its rich culture and highly developed technologies. I wanted to observe research and surgical activities of the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science of Nagoya City University. When I knew that I was awarded an ICO Three-Months-Fellowship I felt like I won a million in the lottery and was so happy that my heart leaped with joy.

Finally, I want to thank the ICO and the ICO Fellowships Board for such a unique opportunity to improve my clinical knowledge and skills! Without such a support I think it would have been impossible for me to observe the highest degree of ophthalmological care!

I gratefully appreciate the ICO Fellowship Board! I wish ICO Fellowships Program prosperity and that it continues its efforts for the benefit of mankind and ophthalmology!

Dr. Lukpan Orazbekov, Kazakh Eye Research Institute, Almaty, Kazakhstan - ICO Fellow
Looking back, it has become very clear that the ICO Fellowships training has been very beneficial for me as well as for my country. It was the first turning point in my professional life. After the training, I have been able to pass on my newly acquired knowledge and skills to my juniors and also help in disseminating the latest ophthalmological information and surgical skills in the teaching programs of our eye department.

ICO Fellowships training has granted me the opportunity to have a sustained relationship with my benefactor, Prof. Dr. Carlo Schönfeld of Augenklinik Herzog Carl Theodor, who has been always generous and kind to me. Not only giving me a chance to learn in Munich but also he travelled frequently to our country to do vitreoretinal surgery with our team. These ongoing experiences are invaluable to me and also to my country’s ophthalmological society. I am also hoping to have a long lasting and kind support from my mentors in the future to be able to update my knowledge and skills regarding vitreoretinal surgery.

It is hoped that my training in ICO would be the beginning of further cooperation with your esteemed organization accepting further candidates from our country to acquire the latest factual and operative knowledge for our newer generation ophthalmic surgeons.

Finally, I would like to thank my trainers and the officials of ICO Fellowships Program for taking very good care of me during my training. I could not have wished for any better support and warm hospitality offered to me during my stay in Munich as an ICO Fellowships trainee.

Dr. Chaw Lwin Wai - ICO Fellow from Myanmar who was trained in Vitreoretina at Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich, Germany
I spent 3 months at the Department of Ophthalmology, Saarland University Medical Center in Homburg as an ICO Fellow under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Berthold Seitz. I have learned a lot in examining the patients and assisted in the operating theatre for a wide range of surgical procedures such as glaucoma, corneal transplantation, cataract surgery and vitreoretinal surgery.

I wrote a case report entitled „Block excision and tectonic corneoscleral graft for recurrent cystic epithelial downgrowth despite repeated alcohol injection“ with Prof. Seitz and Prof. Viestenz and published it in the Journal of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (JCRS).

I am very pleased that I have learned a lot of new information that I can apply for my patients in the future and can give a lot of advice to the resident students.

I want to thank Prof. Seitz, Mrs. Cordula, my sponsor Hoya Surgical Optics GmbH, Mrs. Pillion, Mrs. Jones, Dr. Löw, Prof. Viestenz, my colleagues and all people who helped me to reach to Homburg. This was an amazing Praktikum with an amazing team under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Berthold Seitz.

Dr. Heba AlSaraiji - ICO Fellow from Syria
Nellie Fong has supported the ICO Fellowships Program for many years by referring promising young ophthalmologists from China to us for a three months training in various subspecialties.

Nellie Fong is also the founding chairman of the mobile cataract operation organisation Lifeline Express in China and a former chairman of PriceWaterhouseCoopers’ China operations.

The ICO Fellowships Program has been most helpful to ophthalmologists in Mainland China as it brings an international perspectives to their lives. Ophthalmologists returning from the Program always had so much praise for the Program and I am sure the Program impact on their professional lives.

The Chinese Lifeline Express Foundation and PriceWaterhouse-Coopers are most honoured to be part of and support such a highly respectable and love-giving Program.

Mrs. Nellie Fong from HongKong - ICO Sponsor
Every year 7000 to 8000 children are diagnosed with retinoblastoma. Worldwide 70 per cent of these children die because of a lack of information, late diagnosis and poor treatment possibilities and facilities.

KAKS Germany is very happy to have established a joint fellowships program with the ICO for six retinoblastoma specialists in 2016 (more in 2017). Together we wish to encourage doctors and hospitals from developing countries to apply for this unique opportunity.

We wish to improve practical skills and broaden perspectives of treatment and early detection of retinoblastoma. Fellows are expected to take the acquired knowledge and skills back to their home countries and take part in programs to preserve vision, prevent blindness and save childrens’ lives all over the world.

We are very happy to receive the first reports in summer 2016, when the first doctors came back from their Fellowships, and are happy about this fruitful and enriching cooperation. We are happy to profit from the excellent work and experience of the ICO in the last 15 years and are proud to be a part of the ICO Fellowships Program.

Our first Fellow is from Kathmandu, Nepal, and we were very happy to meet Dr. Purnima Rajkarnikar in person this summer together with her chief ocular oncologist, Dr. Rohit Saiju, in the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology in Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology has played a significant role in the dramatic improvement of eye care in Nepal since 1994 and has set a new standard for delivering outstanding eye care in the developing world based on its high quality, affordable services and medical education programs.

To extend professional care to the field of retinoblastoma, KAKS KinderAugenKrebsStiftung Germany has now engaged in the foundation of a retinoblastoma clinic at Tilganga. After visiting Tilganga in July 2016, meeting a dedicated team, encountering impressive and well organized eye care facilities, however, lacking sufficient treatment facilities for retinoblastoma patients, we agreed with Tilganga doctors and management to found the **KAKS Tilganga National Retinoblastoma Center**.

We wish to thank the International Council of Ophthalmology for their support and expert help, for their excellent work and we are proud to be a part of this wonderful ICO initiative.

**HILFE FÜR KINDER MIT AUGENKREBS**
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It's my great pleasure to convey the best wishes to the ICO Fellowships Program for its 15th birthday! AIER Eye Hospital Group and I am very honored to be part of the Program which is of great importance and value.

We are very much delighted and grateful with the outcome the Program has shown, which in turn shows the ICO's dedication and affection towards work.

The ICO's whole staff is sincere towards performing their roles and responsibilities. We look forward to our continued cooperations in all our endeavors to make a better world.

Prof. Dr. Shibo Tang, Medical Director of AIER Eye Hospital Group, China - ICO Sponsor
Thank you to our supporters ... among others
The growing financial support for the Program in Germany made it necessary to found a Germany-based charitable association and so the International Ophthalmological Fellowship Foundation IOFF was founded in March 2007. Under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Gottfried O.H. „Fritz“ Naumann and Prof. Dr. Peter Gabel, more than US$ 500.000 have been raised since then.

If you wish to support the ICO Fellowships Program, please email fellowship@icoph.org.

Bank details:
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We would be happy to discuss donation options for international sponsors.

You can also contribute through the ICOFoundation at:

https://www.icofoundation.org/contribute/make-a-donation.html

Thank you very much.
Biannually, at the World Ophthalmology Congress we invite our Hosts, former Fellows and those who support us to

the ICO Fellowships Reception

... is a wonderful chance to get together
... to exchange news
... meet old friends and make new friends
... to network
... to meet hosts and supervisors
... enhance cooperation

ICO Host Prof. Robert „Bob“ Ritch from The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai

Prof. Dr. Peter Gabel, Cordula Gabel-Obermaier, Prof. Dr. Berthold Seitz and William Felch, CEO of ICO (left to right)

ICO President Prof. Dr. Hugh R. Taylor welcomes the audience
THANKS to generous donations by individual ophthalmologists, the Allergan Foundation and contributions from Dr. Pinar Aydin, Dr. Akef El-Maghraby, Mr. William Felch jr., Dr. Kunle Hassan, Dr. Martine Jager, Dr. Bruce Spivey and Dr. Hugh Taylor, we were able to offer travel grants to ICO Fellows to cover expenses to attend the bi-annual World Ophthalmology Congress WOC in Mexico 2016.

We received more than 130 applications and were able to support happy 11 Travel Grant Awardees. Awardees come from Uganda, Yemen, Turkey, India, Nepal, Jordan, Congo, Nigeria, Usbekistan and Chile.
Invitation to the ICO Fellowship Birthday Party

The ICO Fellowship Program celebrates its 15th birthday.

We would like to celebrate with you!

Please feel invited to attend the ICO Fellowship Reunion during the DOG 2016 in Berlin.

When:  Friday Sept 30, 2016 from noon to 13:15.
Where:  Estrel room C3, Estrel Hotel, Sonnenallee 125, 12057 Berlin, Germany

After a warm welcome we would like to enjoy a glass of Cremant with you and talk with you about how to make the ICO Fellowships Program flourish and grow further.

Please let us know, if you can accept our invitation (fellowship@icoph.org).

We are looking forward to meeting you in Berlin!

Thank you very much and best wishes

Berthold Seitz

Cordula Gabel-Obermaier
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# Connect with the ICO

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Responsible for the contents and format: Cordula Gabel-Obermaier, Munich; Susan Pillion, Homburg/Saar; Marc Müller, Homburg/Saar; Peter Gabel, Munich; William Felch, San Francisco; Berthold Seitz, Homburg/Saar

Homburg/Saar, September 2016