



Programs and Initiatives

About the ICO

The International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) represents and serves professional associations of ophthalmologists throughout the world.

The ICO works with ophthalmologic societies and others to enhance ophthalmic education and improve access to the highest quality eye care in order to preserve and restore vision for the people of the world.

Our program categories are Refocusing Ophthalmic Education, Enhancing Eye Care and Advancing Leadership. We offer news, resources and connections to world ophthalmologists, ophthalmic educators and leaders, especially for those in developing countries.

I. Refocusing Ophthalmic Education

World Ophthalmology Congress (WOC)

First held in Brussels in 1857, the International Congress of Ophthalmology, now the World Ophthalmology Congress, is the longest continuing international meeting in all of medicine.

The WOC is the ICO's primary clinical education program, bringing together ophthalmologists from all over the world to learn the latest in clinical ophthalmology. The Congress offers a comprehensive scientific program focused on the latest advances in ophthalmology and eye care, presented by world leaders in research and clinical practice.

The WOC is held every second year in a different geographic region. WOC 2010 is in Berlin, WOC 2012 in Abu Dhabi (February 16 – 20), and WOC 2014 will be held in Tokyo (April 2 – 6).

ICO International Examinations for Ophthalmologists

The ICO Examinations promote the excellence of eye care worldwide by encouraging individuals to acquire and maintain the highest standard of practice of ophthalmology, and are the only worldwide medical specialty examinations.

Each year, the ICO offers examinations throughout the world to help ophthalmologists evaluate and demonstrate their knowledge of ophthalmology. They are broadly accepted and used in a variety of ways by national organizations and residency programs.

More than 15,000 candidates have taken the ICO International Basic and Clinical Sciences Examinations since 2000. The Advanced Examination for ophthalmologists (new in 2010) tests the latest knowledge and common sense decision-making.

ICO Programs and Initiatives

The Basic and Clinical Sciences Examinations are offered once each year in April with a January 31 application deadline. The Advanced Examination will be offered in October each year with an application deadline of July 31.

The ICO Examinations are directed by David Taylor, FRCOphth.

ICO International Fellowships

The ICO International Fellowship was established to help young ophthalmologists from developing nations improve their practical skills and broaden their perspectives of ophthalmology.

The Fellowships generally last three months, and fellows are expected to bring the acquired knowledge and skills back to their country of origin and take part in programs to preserve and restore vision.

Under the leadership of Fellowship Director Veit-Peter Gabel, MD, approximately 60 ICO Fellowships can be awarded each year. More than 450 Fellowships have been awarded since the program began in 2000.

ICO International Fellowship application deadlines are March 31 and September 30 of each year.

Education Committee and Task Forces

Mark O. M. Tso, MD, chairs the ICO's Education Committee, which has multinational task forces focused on defining curricula and guidelines for:

- Ophthalmology residency education
- Ophthalmology continuing education
- Allied health education
- Medical student education in ophthalmology
- Subspecialty education
- Emerging technology for teaching and learning.

As the curricula and guidelines in each area are defined, the Education Task Forces focus on their dissemination and implementation in different parts of the world.

Curriculum for Ophthalmology Residency Training

The ICO Education Committee has issued revised "Principles and Guidelines of a Curriculum for Education of the Ophthalmic Specialist."

Drafted by Morton F. Goldberg, MD, and Andrew G. Lee, MD, for the ICO's International Task Force on Ophthalmology Residents and Specialist Education, the Curriculum Guidelines cover basic, standard and advanced levels of ophthalmic training. For each level, the Curriculum Guidelines define cognitive and technical skills for each of 14 clinical conditions and for ophthalmic practice in general.

Courses for Directors of Residency Programs

In June 2004, Enrique Graue, MD, then a member of the Advisory Committee to the ICO, organized a first Ophthalmology Program Directors Course in Mexico. There were more than 80 participants, including an international faculty and residency program directors from 20 residency programs throughout Mexico.

Since then, the ICO has sponsored courses for ophthalmology residency program directors in Peru, Egypt, Pakistan, Argentina, Brazil, Ethiopia, China, Indonesia, Colombia, Slovenia and Turkey, among others.

World Ophthalmology Residency Development (WORD)

WORD, www.icoword.org, is an online forum and resource center to enhance residency education, with a monthly email newsletter that highlights resources for teaching residents.

Curriculum and Handbook for Medical Student Education

The ICO International Task Force on Ophthalmic Education of Medical Students, has developed "Principles and Guidelines of a Curriculum for Ophthalmic Education of Medical Students."

The Curriculum proposes a range of standards for medical student education, including ophthalmic cognitive and clinical skills for medical students and the time allotment for ophthalmic education in medical schools.

Now chaired by Susan Lightman, FRCOphth, and Peter McCluskey, MD, the Task Force has published an *ICO Medical Student Handbook*, which contains tables of core knowledge and key ophthalmic disorders to assist medical students. This pocket-sized booklet summarizes the key points in ophthalmology and is designed to be portable and easy-to-use.

Curricula for Training Allied Health Personnel

The ICO Education Committee's International Task Force on Allied Health Education has evaluated curricula for training allied eye care personnel from around the world and defined "Principles and Guidelines of Curricula for Para-ophthalmic Vision Specialist Education." In 2009, The Task Force released a new curriculum, the International Core Curriculum For Ophthalmic Assistants," developed in cooperation with the Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCAHPO).

Ophthalmologic societies and residency programs are encouraged to reproduce, translate and adapt these curricula as needed to enhance ophthalmic education in all regions of the world.

This Task Force is chaired by William Astle, MD.

Guidelines for Continuing Medical Education

The ICO International Task Force on Continuing Medical Education (CME) in Ophthalmology has defined "Principles and Guidelines of a Curriculum for Continuing Medical Education in Ophthalmology."

Now chaired by Juan Verdaguer, MD, the Task Force has formed a group of CME Coordinators from ICO member societies and has developed a model CME point system for use particularly where societies do not have such a system.

Helmerich Fellowships for Ophthalmologists in Developing Countries

Sponsored by the Retina Research Foundation in cooperation with the ICO Foundation, this fellowship program began in 2009 to honor the public service leadership of Mr. W.H. Helmerich III. The Helmerich Fellowships offer advanced subspecialty training to ophthalmologists to help transmit new knowledge to the home country. The successful candidate will be awarded salary for one year, and air transportation support, and the host institution receives an expense stipend. Two, 12-month fellowships are available each year.

II. Enhancing Eye Care

Advocacy for Preservation of Vision

The ICO has asked ophthalmologic societies to name an advocate to work with the ICO, International Association for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), World Health Organization (WHO) and VISION 2020 to increase support for eye care and the prevention of visual loss. An ICO advocacy toolkit, which will include information on the cost benefit of eye care and teach effective advocacy, is currently being developed.

The ICO also maintains relationships and represents ophthalmology to a variety of organizations that have an impact on ophthalmology, eye care and vision around the world.

Serge Resnikoff, MD, is ICO Director for Advocacy.

Vision 2020: The Right To Sight

The ICO is a founding member of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and active supporter of "VISION 2020: The Right To Sight," an international initiative with the goal of eradicating preventable blindness around the world by the year 2020.

"VISION 2020: The Right To Sight" was organized in 1999 by the IAPB, WHO and various Non-Governmental Development Organizations (NGOs).

ICO International Clinical Guidelines

Recognizing that "appropriate eye care" is resource-dependent and based on the culture, economic environment and health services system of a region or country, the ICO has defined International Clinical Guidelines that are intended to serve a supportive and educational role for ophthalmologists worldwide, with the goal of improving the quality of eye care for patients.

There are 20 International Clinical Guidelines currently available, including the first evidence-based clinical guideline published on HIV/AIDS in the eye.

The ICO Guidelines Director is Richard L. Abbott, MD.

International Standards for Vision and Eye Care

The ICO Committee on Standards report on "Vision Requirements for Driving Safety" recognizes the profound impact of vision requirements for driving and the need to make the requirements more uniform around the world. It evaluates:

- Current visual requirements for obtaining a driver's license in various countries
- The literature on the relationship between vision and driving safety
- Ways to assess different visual functions that relate to driving ability.

The ICO has adopted a resolution on "Visual Standards - Aspects and Ranges of Vision Loss" to encourage consistent measurement and reporting of vision loss in population surveys around the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) is incorporating parts of the ICO's resolution into the revisions of the *International Classification of Diseases*.

"Assessment and Rehabilitation of Vision-related Functioning" prepared by Standards Committee Member August Colenbrander, MD, was adopted by the ICO in 2008. The report makes the distinction between "Visual Functions," which describe how the eye functions and "Functional Vision," which describes how the person functions in vision-related activities. It aims to expand awareness of the functional consequences of vision loss among all those involved with eye care.

Tero Kivelä, MD, is the ICO Director for Standards.

Research Agenda for Global Blindness Prevention

Chaired by Alfred Sommer, MD, the ICO Research Committee has defined opportunities for operational and epidemiologic research that would benefit underserved populations.

The Committee's "Research Agenda for Global Blindness Prevention," which has been endorsed by WHO, concentrates on the seven ocular diseases and conditions that cause the greatest vision disability in the largest number of individuals around the world:

1. Cataract
2. Trachoma
3. Onchocerciasis
4. Xerophthalmia
5. The Glaucomas
6. Diabetic Retinopathy and Age-Related Macular Degeneration
7. Refractive Error.

ICO Task Force on Uncorrected Refractive Error

The ICO Task Force on Uncorrected Refractive Error (URE) was formed to strengthen the involvement of ophthalmology, in cooperation with others, in addressing the 153 million persons worldwide who experience visual loss from uncorrected refractive error.

Together with LIGHT FOR THE WORLD (LFTW) the ICO Task Force on URE is finalizing a school eye health program; which includes screening for eye health, service provision of spectacles, advocacy, systems strengthening and operational research; to be carried out in Pakistan and Nigeria.

III. Advancing Leadership

Representation of Ophthalmology Internationally

The ICO is the only ophthalmologic organization with an official relationship with the World Health Organization and was one of the founders of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness.

Leadership Development/WORLD

The ICO holds World Ophthalmic Roundtable on Leadership Development (WORLD) meetings to bring leaders of ophthalmologic societies and educational institutions together to exchange information and ideas that will help develop effective organizations and programs to enhance ophthalmic education and access to eye care.

Policies and Positions on Vision and Eye Care Issues

As part of its advocacy efforts, the ICO has adopted and promoted policies and positions on issues related to eye care around the world, including:

- ICO Bahrain Declaration on Trachoma and Trichiasis Surgery: to reaffirm the importance of trichiasis surgery to treat trachoma and to encourage ophthalmologists around the world to ensure the quality of trichiasis surgery through appropriate training and supervision.
- Advocating "twinning:" ongoing collaboration and cooperation between ophthalmologic institutions and organizations in developed and developing countries
- Urging the mandatory inclusion of ophthalmology in the curriculum for all medical schools
- Encouraging ophthalmology departments to allocate at least five percent of the positions in their training programs to individuals from countries where there is an undersupply of ophthalmologists
- Supporting a total ban on antipersonnel landmines
- Advocating the inclusion of statistics on vision loss and blindness in all WHO and almanac publications.

Support for Ophthalmologic Societies and other Services

The ICO's Web site is a guide to finding information, education and resources related to ophthalmology and vision around the world.

Directed by ICO President Bruce E. Spivey, MD, the ICO offers information on the ICO, ophthalmologic organizations, ophthalmic education and preservation and restoration of vision, as well as resources for ophthalmologic societies, ophthalmologists and ophthalmology leaders.

E-mail Newsletters

The *ICO Leader Letter* is a monthly e-mail newsletter offering news and resources to ICO member representatives and other ophthalmologic leaders worldwide.

The ICO also sends an e-mail newsletter called *ICO Notes* to ICO members each month.

Directory of Ophthalmological Societies and Residencies

The ICO maintains a comprehensive listing of information on ophthalmologic societies and ophthalmology residency programs throughout the world.

Information contained in the database and the ***Directory of Ophthalmological Societies*** is copyrighted by the ICO and can be used only with its permission.

ICOFoundation

The International Council of Ophthalmology Foundation (ICOFoundation) was formed to advocate preservation and restoration of vision through education, quality eye care and research. To that end, the ICOFoundation seeks financial support for ICO programs to prevent, alleviate and eliminate visual loss.

For more information, see www.icofoundation.org.