A Note From Vision Share’s President and CEO

With a total of 1600 domestic tissues placed, 3300 international tissues placed and 700 research tissues placed, 2016 proved to be a building block for 2017 and beyond. Vision Share’s (VS), 2017 goals include:

- Leverage status, purpose and reach to grow placement opportunities
- Client, member satisfaction and membership growth
- Leverage VS’s sustainable, scalable model and expand global footprint.

VS began the 2017 year with a strong perpetual grind of performance improvement, team collaboration, business developmental progression and continuous marketing outreach. In the first two months of 2017, the international business development team has finalized newly signed contracts from numerous countries in Africa (Rwanda, Mozambique, Nigeria, Zambia, Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania), Dominican Republic and Bangladesh. Domestically, we have signed new contracts in Minnesota and are on the cusp of finalizing agreements in the Northeast as well as in the SouthWest. With the expanded outreach of our International business development team, we are also awaiting signatures on proposed contracts in Central and South America and other parts of the world.

As VS continues to implement a robust outreach strategy, VS is preparing for attendance at multiple key conferences in the coming months. ASCRS and ARVO will be occurring in May. VS has representatives attending both events and will staff the VS exhibitor booths at both conferences.

In June, VS will be hosting its second member’s meeting of 2017 and an open Board of Directors meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah. Look for us to make a big splash at EBAA 2017!

VS is in the news! Since October, 2016, VS’s outreach campaign has gained significant coverage across multiple publications. VS has been featured in nine publications throughout a period of four months and has five more in the works for April. To view VS articles, go to https://visionshare.org/category/news/

In terms of staff growth, VS has hired: Jennifer Mihic for AP/AR, Heather Cummings as a Domestic Ocular Client Services Coordinator, Philippe Audibert, International, and Ellen Spector, Domestic – NE, and Sara Spiess, Domestic – Midwest and SW.

The VS Business Development team is mission centered individuals whose daily goals and responsibilities are focused around building and maintaining client relationships and reporting on outreach and clients activity relative to placing tissue. They monitor all day to day client exchanges between the VS Ocular Client Services team and clients and collaborate with direct and indirect staff relative to fulfilling those responsibilities. The team schedules on-site visits with surgeons, eye banks, and other partner organizations to assess needs, plan and establish distribution services, and develop professional working relationships.

In 2016, the team signed eight domestic contracts and twelve international contracts. A representative from the Vision Share Business Development team attended and supported four wetlabs, and six local, four national, and ten international conferences. The team has also presented at the Cornea Society Fellow Summit and conducted a summer webinar series with members.

Business Development Team

Thus far, in 2017, the Business Development team has been highly active in securing contracts domestically and internationally. Domestically, the Business Development team has finalized contracts in the Northeast and Midwest, with numerous submitted contracts anticipated to be signed in the near future. Internationally, twelve new contracts have been signed. These contracts include Dominican Republic, Bangladesh, and several countries in Africa.

Additionally, Phil Waitzman and Ellen Spector attended a dinner with Baltimore Cornea Doctors where twenty doctors were present. The plan is to appear at seven local and three national conferences this year. The international team had attended two conferences in January, presented at the Magrabi International Congress and APAO in Singapore. There are seven additional international conferences planned for 2017. Business Development has taken an active leadership role with training and development. Ellen Spector has created a wetlab calendar with twelve wetlabs planned for this year. To learn more on upcoming wetlabs, visit page four of this newsletter.

Upcoming Events

June 13, 2017
Board of Directors Meeting
and Member’s Meeting
Salt Lake City, UT

November, 2017
Board of Directors Meeting
Member’s Meeting
New Orleans, LA
*Details to follow
Vision Share Wetlabs

Vision Share has teamed up with certified eye bank technicians and other surgeons to host wetlabs that guide the attendees through the cornea processing procedure. At the trainings, surgeons have hands-on practice with processed and unprocessed tissue. These wetlabs give the doctors a chance to practice their skills in areas such as suturing, and DSAEK or DMEK processing. Medical residents and fellows may start with suturing skills and then work their way up to DSAEK or DMEK processing. Doctors are able to share their knowledge with each other and students in order to share the most effective and efficient way to process.

Vision Share hosted a wetlab in Baltimore, Maryland at the University of Maryland. There were eleven residents from University of Maryland Medical Center and Krieger Eye Institute at Sinai Hospital that attended the wetlab at the Midtown Campus. Dr. Munir and Dr. Pillar provided some training and assisted the residents with suturing and PKP punching. Mark Soper from Indiana Lions Eye Bank supplied the tissue and set up the wetlab and assisted the doctors. Moria and Alcon provided additional wetlab materials for the doctors. Ellen Spector from Vision Share organized the wetlab with Dr. Munir and Dr. Schectet and supplied additional microscopes and dinner for everyone.

DMEK in a Box

As part of the Vision Share Wetlab opportunity, VS now offers surgeons the ability to purchase a "DMEK in a Box", an Iowa Lions Eye Bank product. The DMEK in a Box includes all the instruments and tools needed to continue to practice DMEK skills.

What is included:

- Jones Tube (1)
- 15 degree angle blade (1)
- 30° Cannula (3)
- 5 mL Syringe McPherson Tying Forceps (1)
- Corneal Forceps (0.12 mm) (1)
- Sterile Sleeves x2 Surgical Eye Spears (2 packs)
- Trypan Blue (0.006%) Ophthalmic Solution (1)
- 27 gauge needle (1) Sterile Drape Towel (1) BSS dropper bottles (3)
- Surgical Skin Maker (1) Bundle of 4x4 Gauze (~15)
- 3 mL Luer locking syringes (3) - (two for BSS, one for air)
- 2.8 mm keratome (1)
- 14 French suction catheter tubing has been placed within the DMEK Jones tube package

Vision Share continues to search for special candidates to assume important roles for our growth. Vision Share is seeking qualified candidates for the positions of OCS Coordinator, Director of Client Relations and Business Development for the Northwest and Southeast Regions and Manager/Director of Corporate Partnerships and Philanthropy.

A Q1 survey was circulated to VS clients seeking feedback relative to the areas of tissue quality, shipping and overall customer service. More to come as results come in.

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Angelique Pillar, M.D
Director of Research for Mid-Atlantic Cornea Consultants

Dr. Angelique Pillar is the Director of Research for the Mid-Atlantic Cornea Consultants in Baltimore, Maryland. Dr. Pillar’s practice focuses on the most modern methods for corneal diagnosis and treatment including external disease, refractive and complex cataract surgery.

Dr. Pillar was raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, she attended Yale University and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology. She received her medical degree from Harvard Medical School and completed her Ophthalmology residency at the University of Maryland where she was elected Chief Resident and voted Outstanding Resident in Ophthalmology. She studied cutting edge corneal and refractive surgery at the world famous Cleveland Clinic.

Dr. Pillar is in her first year of private practice after finishing her cornea fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic. The private practice she has joined, Mid Atlantic Cornea Consultants, has enjoyed working with Vision Share in obtaining donor cornea tissue for their patients and also enabling their residents to obtain corneas, disqualified for transplantation, for use in research and education. One of their current resident’s, Nishant Soni will be presenting his work in looking at extended storage time between prep and use of DMEK tissue at this year’s ASCRS in Las Angeles, California.

Dr. Pillar is a member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology, the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, the International Society of Refractive Surgery, and the Cornea Society.

On the following page, you will find a patient success story of a corneal transplant completed by Dr. Pillar.

Publications and Presentations by Dr. Pillar

- 2015 Fall Educational Symposium, Cornea Society and Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA) at the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO): “Time Between Tissue Preparation and Use On Endothelial Cell Viability in Endothelial Keratoplasty”
- 2016 Cleveland Ophthalmologic Society (COS): “Corneal Trauma & Corneal Transplants”
curbs, and even cracks in the sidewalk. She had completely lost her depth perception. She began using a cane and sunglasses to block out the bright lights.

Nancy had cataract surgery to start with and 4 months ago she had her first cornea transplant in her left eye. Two months ago she had her second corneal transplant in her right eye. Nancy remembers having to lie flat on her back until the donated cornea was totally attached.

Nancy’s corneal transplants were completed by Dr. Angelique Pillar of the Mid-Atlantic Corneal Consultants. Nancy’s corneal transplants were a complete success and her life has drastically changed since. She now has 20/20 with glasses and can enjoy a clear view of the colors and people around her.

As part of Vision Share’s Marketing Outreach goals for 2017, weekly meetings have been set in place with Pascale Marketing Group for updates on publications involving Vision Share in magazines, channels, and websites such as Ophthalmology Times, Eyewire TV, Ophthalmology Management, EyewireToday.com, Ophthalmology Web, Healio Ocular Surgery News and Review of Ophthalmology. Vision Share and Pascale discuss published articles, as well as, articles that are in the works for publication. Vision Share expects up to 5 articles to be published this April, 2017 in OIS Podcast, Eye World, Advanced Ocular Care, Millenial Eye, and Ocular Surgery News.

The Lions Eye Institute for Transplant and Research (LEITR) has some big news to share. LEITR has announced the acquisition of International Sight Restoration (ISR) in Tampa doubling its size and creating one of the largest eye banks and distributors of corneas in the world. This expansion will reach to about 80 different countries, restoring sight to people all over the globe. LEITR now has offices in Florida, Louisiana and Mexico. With LEITR already being one of the largest combined eye banks and research centers in the United States, Lions Eye Institute’s new international distribution network positions the company to take advantage of consolidation trends to increase efficiency and improve outcomes for corneal transplant patients.

Even with the integration with ISR and gaining new locations, LEITR’s staff has made time for team activities and giving back to the community. LEITR hosted their Monthly Koffee Klatch, a kickball game after work and staff went to donate blood together. LEITR also completed their new entry way into the Tampa facility.
On March 14, 2017, Vision Share's Jennifer Mochinski finalized an agreement with Bangladesh Eye Hospital in Dhaka. Vision Share sent six tissues for the first ever cornea procedures to occur at Bangladesh Eye Hospital.

Dr. Shailendra Sugrim, transplanting surgeon, Patient (from left to right)

Twelve corneal transplant surgeries were completed at the Georgetown Public Hospital in Guyana in a period of one week. This was one of the first mass corneal transplant endeavors to have ever been conducted in Guyana. Twelve tissues were supplied by the Lions Medical Eye Bank and Research Center of Eastern Virginia through Vision Share’s distribution team at no charge to the surgeons. Nine of the twelve transplants were conducted by Dr. Shailendra Sugrim. A proposal was put into place to establish an eye bank in Guyana.

Dr. Stephen Walker was the coordinating surgeon for these corneal transplants. Dr. Walker has confirmed that Dr. Celeste Hinds will be partaking in a three month long Cornea Fellowship training where she will engage in the plans that the Department of Ophthalmology has for her, proceeding with the establishment of an eye bank in Guyana.

The APAO 2017 congress, which was co-organized with the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO), gathered a distinguished international faculty of top specialists in ophthalmology from around the world to share their expertise and experience with clinicians, eye surgeons and researchers from the Asia-Pacific region and globally. This year the congress was held in Singapore at the Suntec Singapore Convention Center and had over 1,000 international speakers’ presenting current topics. Philippe Audibert and Phil Fasone represented Vision Share by exhibiting at the four day conference. They were able to spend time with Vision Share’s Eversight Partners, Collin Ross and Erik Heller. The Business Development team uncovered leads in six countries that are currently being developed. Phil had the opportunity to visit Kuala Lumpur and meet with 3 new potential clients. Sunway Medical Centre, Dr. Thiagaswari and her team were one of multiple meetings Phil attended in Malaysia.

Sunway Medical Center, Juala Lumpur. Phil Fasone, Dr. Thagaswari and staff (from left to right)

Dr. Chowdhury, Mir Moshiur Rahman (from left to right)

Tissue Supply Agreement Ceremony

On March 14, 2017, Vision Share’s Jennifer Mochinski finalized an agreement with Bangladesh Eye Hospital in Dhaka. Vision Share sent six tissues for the first ever cornea procedures to occur at Bangladesh Eye Hospital.
Two years of hard work paid off for Lauren Johnson, Eversight Tissue Processing Services Manager, and Dr. Parag Majmudar of the Chicago Cornea Consultants, after investigating parameters affecting endothelial cell health for a tissue staining procedure, popular with both surgeons and eye banks.

Using grant funding, provided by the EBAA, the pair discovered the optimal time to stain the cornea with trypan blue dye—a process commonly used to help surgeons visualize tissue during surgery. The cornea is vulnerable to damage if the dye is applied too long, especially for procedures like DMEK in which the tissue is no thicker than a human hair. If not dyed long enough, surgeons may have difficulty positioning the tissue properly. Both factors can increase the incidence of transplant complications and even rejection.

“Finding the right balance to satisfy surgeon needs during the procedure, as well as promote graft adherence and favorable patient results, was paramount in this study,” Johnson said. “We look forward to sharing our results with the greater eye banking community to ensure the best outcomes for all cornea transplant patients.”

Johnson and Dr. Majmudar’s research was recently published in Cornea, the leading peer-reviewed ophthalmology journal and presented at the EBAA’s Annual Scientific Symposium.

Saving Sight recently sent out an article that confirms they have transitioned to Optisol GS, replacing Life4C, for their tissue storage media. Saving Sight made the transition due to the larger percentage of physicians that prefer and/or request Optisol GS compared to Life4C.

Optisol GS is known for its safety in the storage of corneal tissue. It contains gentamicin and streptomycin for broad spectrum, gram-negative and positive bacterial control. In normal conditions the media holds a stable pH of 7.0-8.0 and is clear with a light, rosy-orange color. A change of color to yellow or red indicates an unacceptable change in pH and tissue should not be used. The chart below clearly demonstrates the color change relative to pH.

Sierra Donor Services in Sacramento, California is proud to announce their growth over the past few decades in finding a facility that offers optimized performance, both from a scientific and technological perspective, as well as a beautiful space configured to provide opportunity for a collaborative, progressive, and ever expanding work demands.

The clinical facility allows more opportunities to aid physicians in transforming patients' lives with new processes and techniques. The entire clinical space exceeds all safety and regulatory standards in tissue and eye banking with multiple environments for processing tissue grafts: ISO Class 5 and ISO Class 7 Clean Rooms and Laminar Flow Hoods. On-site operating suites for recovery of tissues and a state-of-the-art instrument sterilization department complete the new space for SDS.

Expansion of the eye bank’s services will include a phlebotomy program to draw blood samples which will be used to create autologous serum dye drops to treat a variety of eye conditions; expanded laboratories to accommodate cross-training of technicians and allowing SDSEB to host wetlabs in conjunction with the Eye Bank Association of America and other partners.

Utah Lions Eye Bank Record Breaking Year

The Lions Eye Bank of Utah has launched their new website! Check out www.utaheyebank.org to see new additions and news.

On 2/13/2017, Utah Lions Eye Bank held a press conference where Chris Hanna announced a record breaking year of over 1000 tissues placed for corneal transplants and over 1300 placed in research centers. During this press conference, Chris Hanna had the privilege of introducing the attendees to a woman who has had eight out of the 50 corneal transplants in her family due to a genetic disorder. To view this sensational story about how corneal transplants and tissue donations have saved the sight of this entire family, go to https://youtu.be/MGQTlF9mLo.

This coming April 1st, Wade McEntire, Utah’s Medical Director, Mark Mifflin, Lori McCoy together with Moran International Outreach and other Utah members will be heading to Bolivia for a mission trip where they have already scheduled over 30 sight saving patient surgeries.

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