

SEE RESTORES SIGHT IN BANGLADESH: EXPEDITION ON THE HEELS OF CYCLONE SIDR

Just days after the Cyclone Sidr left a swath of destruction throughout much of Bangladesh in November last year, SEE completed a successful eye clinic in the capital city of Dhaka. Through the efforts of Sven Redin, M.D., from Sweden and Munirul Huq, M.D., from Bangladesh, 48 patients received sight-restoring surgeries.

Although the cyclone disrupted operations temporarily at Dr. Huq's surgical facilities, he was determined to hold the eye clinic. Amidst the devastation, Dr. Huq screened 300

potential patients, and worked with SEE International on the logistics of transporting donated medical supplies, including suture and intraocular lenses, to Bangladesh.

"There will be serious long-term effects from the cyclone," described Dr. Huq. "More people will not be able to receive any health services at all. We expect more patients in 2008 and more poor patients from the affected areas."

SEE International has collaborated with Dr. Huq on five surgical expeditions since 2004, and three more are scheduled for this year. Dr. Redin has been a SEE Affiliate since 2004 and has participated in three expeditions to India. According to the World Health Organization estimates, there are more than 900,000 blind people in Bangladesh, out of a population of 150 million people.

Restoring Sight and Restoring Lives

A 65-year-old woman's life was transformed by a 30-minute eye surgery. Living in poverty, this grandmother had lost sight in her right eye during childhood due to an accidental injury caused by a cow. She successfully raised a family, which included one son and grandchildren, with sight in only one eye. Tragically, five



Photo Credit: Flickr user "uncultured"

years ago, a cataract began to form in her good, left eye. The dense cataract eventually led to complete blindness. She could not see her family, and needed help to eat and to walk. Through the SEE International clinic, the cataract from the left eye was successfully replaced with an implanted lens. Upon the removal of her eye patch the next morning, she was full of joy because she could see

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SURGICAL EYE EXPEDITIONS


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everything around her, including her son. "She smiled such a sweet smile that I named it the 'million-dollar' smile," said Dr. Huq. "You cannot put a price on the gift of sight. It is such a rewarding and emotional moment for a surgeon when a patient regains sight after years of blindness."

In another case, a young woman traveled 124 miles to reach the eye clinic. It was at this clinic that her life was transformed by Dr. Huq, Dr. Redin, and SEE International.

With developmental cataracts in both eyes, she was divorced at a young age due to blindness. Twenty-four hours after the surgery, in which an implanted intraocular lens replaced the clouded lens, she could see perfectly. Her hopes for the future include obtaining a job and remarrying now that her sight has been restored. 



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SEE INTERNATIONAL NAMED "BEST IN AMERICA"

Did you know that SEE International is among the 2,000 nonprofit organizations out of the 1 million in the United States that have received the Best in America Seal of Excellence from the Independent Charities of America? Upon rigorous independent review, SEE International has been found to meet the highest standards of public accountability, program effectiveness and cost effectiveness. More than 97% of donations are used for program services.



SEE AFFILIATE SPOTLIGHT

JANAK SHAH, M.B. DO, DO MS, MMEDSC



Dr. Shah and his wife Preeti with a patient

Dr. Shah has been a dedicated SEE Affiliate ophthalmologist since 1997, hosting numerous expeditions each year for clinics serving the disadvantaged in rural areas in India. In 2008, Dr. Shah is planning to complete 12 clinics in India. Dr. Shah has also hosted multiple educational clinics for technical skills exchanges with participating SEE teams from abroad, along with serving as a repeat faculty member at SEE's Manual Small Incision Cataract Surgery course.

Q. How did you become an Affiliate of SEE?

A. It was probably around 12 years ago. I went to the Academy meeting and met Harry Brown who told me about SEE. He said, "Why don't you jump onto the bandwagon. It will be good fun." So I did, I jumped onto the bandwagon, and I've enjoyed every bit of it.

Q. What makes SEE International unique?

A. The coordination is excellent. The staff is wonderful and beautiful. But I've really only worked for SEE, so I have no comparison. Because it is an old NGO [non-governmental organization], and it caters specifically to ophthalmology, SEE seems to accomplish more good than other NGOs who try to do 10-15 different specialties. Another advantage is that SEE works in tandem with the WHO [World Health Organization] and Vision 2020, which share the goal of every ophthalmologist – to eradicate preventable blindness by the year 2020.

Q. What was one of your most challenging experiences doing humanitarian ophthalmology?

A. Around 2000, my wife, Preeti and I went to Orissa to do vision screening. We had screened three ladies who were all related: mother-in-law, mother, and daughter. All three of them had cataracts. We decided to operate on all of them at the same time, but they refused to come. We were amazed and shocked.

We discovered that they only had one piece of clothing for all three – only one sari, which is the traditional dress in India. One woman would wear the sari and go out, come home, and then the other would use the sari to go out, and so on. We were amazed at this level of poverty. The people in rural India don't have money for basic necessities. Surgeries are a luxury. It was a real eye-opener. We bought saris for them and were able to do the surgeries for all three of the women.

Q. What has been one of your most memorable experiences?

A. Coming to SEE to conduct the Manual Small Incision Cataract Surgery (M/SICS) courses. I love to teach. There are no words to express the joy I have for teaching. It gives me immense joy and satisfaction to be able to teach other ophthalmologists this technique.

Q. What advice would you have for new Affiliates of SEE?

A. First, when you are on a SEE trip, you are operating in different conditions and a different environment. Things are not as easy as they are in your home country. There are no luxuries and you have to deal with the fact that things are different.

Second, I advise that all SEE affiliates learn M/SICS. You don't have to forget Phaco [phacoemulsification], Phaco is here to stay. But for this type of work, no one sutures today. Suture is the surgery of the past. I do not recommend suturing any patient, as sutures have their own set of complications. For all of the rural patients, you do not know

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what kind of condition they are living in and sutures can easily become infected.

Q. What would you have to say to supporters of SEE?

A. Great job. Please continue to do what you are doing. Without you, we couldn't do the work we are doing.

Q. Describe the types of patients you typically see at your clinics.

A. At the rural sites, for example, in Siliguri, we see 70% of patients with mature cataracts and 30% with advanced cataracts. I have been working at this site for 10 years and there is no lack of patients. At the pediatric clinics the patients are 3-12 years old with massive squints [strabismus], and cataracts. It is fun to do cases there. It feels good to catch these patients when they are young because it will make a world of difference to them in the future.

Q. Describe the need in India.

A. For me to try and describe it, you cannot comprehend. It is something you have to experience for yourself.

Q. Is there anything else you would like to convey?

A. I would like to congratulate SEE. You are the best in my book. Great job. 

SEE Affiliates interested in taking SEE's M/SICS course this fall or attending one of Dr. Shah's clinics should call Kari or Kim (805-963-3303), or email kari@seeintl.org.



Dr. Shah demonstrating the M/SICS procedure

2007 YEAR IN REVIEW

- Clinics were held in 34 countries
- 72 Expeditions were completed
- 29 additional Support Packages were sent
- 9,308 surgeries were accomplished
- 40,610 patients were screened



CORPORATE SPONSORS PROVIDE CRITICAL SUPPORT

SEE International's global, sight-restoring programs rely on the support of corporate partners for donations of surgical supplies and equipment, other in-kind products and services, and program funds. Without their generous support, SEE would not have been able to serve 9,308 patients from 34 countries in 2007. In this issue, we focus the spotlight on two of SEE's established corporate partners.

Alcon®

Alcon ophthalmic products have been utilized on every surgical expedition since SEE International was founded. In the spring of 1974, Alcon provided a portable microscope for SEE International's first official expedition to Colombia. Alcon's 34-year partnership with SEE, as the primary contributor of eye care supplies and medications, has enabled SEE volunteer surgeons to restore the precious gift of sight to hundreds of thousands of patients around the world.

Earlier this year, SEE International had the opportunity to host Alcon representatives at its new headquarter facilities. Don Doyle, Manager of Product Donations, and Mike Kuykendall, Medical Missions Specialist, toured the new medical supply operations and witnessed Alcon products being staged for upcoming expeditions. Among the products Alcon supplies today are: intraocular lenses (IOLs), antibiotic eye drops to prevent infection and steroid eye drops to prevent inflammation. <http://www.alcon.com/about-alcon/>



Founder, Harry S. Brown, M.D., F.A.C.S. operating with the first microscope, donated by Alcon.



Magellan's has been a corporate partner of SEE International for the past two decades. Harry Brown, M.D., F.A.C.S., founder of SEE International, came to rely on Magellan's travel products for his international surgical expeditions. Traveling around the world, performing free sight-saving surgeries, Dr. Brown would visit the Santa Barbara retail store and ask for advice on the best luggage and accessories that would make his trips to Africa, Asia and South America more comfortable and productive.

Whenever international diplomats and volunteer eye surgeons visited SEE's headquarters, Dr. Brown would drive them to the Magellan's store for the latest update on travel must-haves. To support SEE International's fight against global blindness, Magellan's has provided equipment such as electrical adapters so that ophthalmic equipment could work in different countries as well as functional travel items for fund-raising events.

Today, Magellan's is proud to support SEE International by providing Magellan's Cares Kits to volunteer eye surgeons as well as promoting SEE International's cause to its worldwide customer base.

<http://www.magellans.com> 

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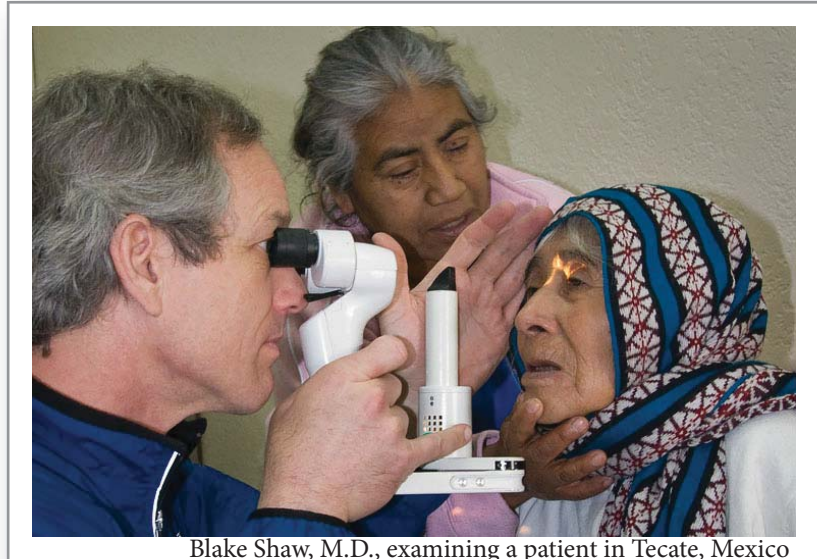
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THE POWER OF COLLABORATION: THE FLYING SAMARITANS



Blake Shaw, M.D., examining a patient in Tecate, Mexico

The Flying Samaritans are on a mission to provide health care to the disadvantaged throughout Baja California, Mexico. As their name implies, this diverse group of volunteers – ranging from physicians to dentists to pilots and other volunteers – charters private, single-engine planes into one of several clinics south of the border. Once in Mexico, they collaborate with local affiliates to perform surgeries, screenings, and any other medical requests of the community completely free of charge. Since 1961, when an ambitious pilot named Aileen Saunders Mellott embarked on the initial journey, the Flying Samaritans have flown like angels into some of the most remote, health-deprived areas of Mexico.

Serving 19 clinics in Baja through 10 chapters and 1500 members, the Flying Samaritans are truly taking off. Since 1998, SEE International has joined

HAWAIIAN EYE CONFERENCE 2008

Each year in January SEE International participates in the Hawaiian Eye Conference. This is a chance to recruit new Affiliates, and share experiences in the field with others involved in mission eye work. At this year's conference, SEE recruited nine new Affiliate surgeons, five of whom are now scheduled to participate in a SEE expedition in 2008. SEE had over 100 visitors at the booth that the Hawaiian Eye Foundation was so gracious to share with SEE.

This year, founder of SEE International, Harry S. Brown, M.D., F.A.C.S, along with some of the board members of the Hawaiian Eye Foundation, and SEE affiliates, John Corboy, M.D., Jeff Rutgard, M.D., Bob Miller, M.D., and Stephan Chang, M.D., presented individually at a workshop entitled "Mission Work: What's It All About?"




forces with the Flying Samaritans to increase the flow of ophthalmic volunteers to this region. Pat Griffith, the liaison between the two organizations, found his initial motivation to become involved through a client at his insurance firm, a pilot named Cindy Fulton. Cindy inspired Pat to embark on his first journey, which has led him to his present collaboration with SEE.

The SEE/Flying Samaritans expeditions occur monthly at a clinic in Tecate, Mexico where 4-5 surgeries are completed and around 20-30 patients receive screenings and follow-up care. Currently, the Flying Samaritans sponsor four SEE affiliates who travel regularly to the Tecate clinic, including Robert Pendleton, M.D., Blake Shaw, M.D., Bill Basuk, M.D., George Ulrich, M.D., and host affiliates Augustin Godinez, M.D., and Marco Cortes, M.D.

Since becoming involved, Pat Griffith has experienced his fair share of memorable moments. One such moment concerned a 16-year-old patient named Israel with corneal dystrophy. Israel came to the clinic out of extreme poverty, living in a house constructed from wood pallettes and a temporary tent-like ceiling. His condition only worsened his situation; in his village he was nicknamed "Little Blind Boy." He would spend his days sitting stoically, dreaming of a better life. With the arrival of the Flying Samaritans, Israel received a corneal transplant by Dr. Cortes. Following his operation,

Israel was required to take medication every two hours. In a touching moment Dr. Cortes gave Israel his watch to ensure the medication would be taken on time. Upon returning to Tecate a few years later, Pat inquired about Israel, whom he found out was no longer the "Little Blind Boy", but an avid soccer player and learning to read English.

The bond between SEE International and the Flying Samaritans is set to continue throughout this year. In 2007, 38 cataract surgeries were performed in Tecate for those in need. This will follow into 2008, as SEE will collaborate with Pat Griffith and the Flying Samaritans to send missions once a month to the Tecate clinic, taking anyone seeking care under their wings. 



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Arequipa, Peru 2007

SBVCP UPDATE

In 2007 SEE International expanded the Santa Barbara Vision Care Program (SBVCP) by opening a vision screening room at the headquarters of SEE International in Goleta. This room was created to provide services in a more timely manner than the previous quarterly clinics. As patients, and sometimes whole families, fill the lobby waiting for their vision screenings every Friday, the great need for the SBVCP in the community is evident.

Time and again words of gratitude are expressed as patients leave the office with their prescriptions, and certificates for free eyeglasses from the Santa Barbara Eyeglass Factory. Some are simply happy that they will now be able to see more clearly, others lives are affected more profoundly. Over the years eyeglasses have been provided to children who have been falling behind in school because they cannot read the board, and adults who call in desperate as their vision has deteriorated to the point where they can no longer perform their jobs properly. There are also the elderly patients who, because they are unable to afford cataract surgery, have slowly had their vision taken from them. For each patient SEE helps, the importance of the vision care services we provide is reinforced.

In 2007 free vision care services were provided to 473 people, and free surgery was arranged for four. The Santa Barbara Vision Care Program was established in the late 1980s to realize SEE International's sight-saving mission in our local community. The goal of SBVCP is to provide early detection in order to prevent potential blindness and alleviate the problems associated with low vision. Vision screenings are held on a weekly basis. If eyeglasses are needed, a certificate is provided for a free pair of eyeglasses from the Santa Barbara Eyeglass Factory. If a more serious problem is detected, patients are referred to one of SEE International's local affiliate ophthalmologists who donate their time and services to assist the patients of the SBVCP. 



Rise Oschner, M.D., screens a SBVCP patient

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