

# Novartis partners with International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness to address eye screening gaps

Oct 08, 2020

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- Novartis, IAPB, and other partner organizations will provide eye screening and education in eye care and raise awareness on the massive unmet needs in eye health.

**October 8, 2020** – In celebration of World Sight Day (WSD), Novartis Healthcare Philippines and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) launched the multi-stakeholder “Collaboration to Preserve Sight” to address eye screening gaps in the country. Initiated by the IAPB, WSD is an annual day of awareness that focuses global attention on blindness and vision impairment. It is the most important advocacy and communications day in the eye health calendar. This year’s WSD is themed “Hope In Sight”.

According to the IAPB, 253 million people in the world are visually impaired – 36 million are blind while 217 million have moderate/severe visual impairment (MSVI). More than a billion people cannot see well simply because they don’t have access to glasses. Over 75% of visual impairment is avoidable.

For the past 10 years, Novartis Global has been running a program called the Excellence in Ophthalmology Vision Award (XOVA). XOVA awards grants to medical specialists who have devised initiatives that are expected to have significant impact on unmet needs in the fields of ophthalmology and optometry.

“Novartis is privileged to collaborate with the IAPB and our other partners to provide eye screening and education in eye care and raise awareness on the massive unmet needs in eye health,” said Jugo Tsumura, President & Managing Director, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

“We thank Novartis and their partners for their commitment to help address blindness and vision impairment in the Philippines. The recent World Health Assembly resolution for eye health, marks the next major mile stone for global eye health. With political commitment to take action to make eye care an integral part of Universal Health Coverage and to implement ‘integrated people-centered eye care’, there is Hope In Sight,” said Ms. Amanda Davis

Chairperson, IAPB Western Pacific.

“We laud this multi-stakeholder partnership to address eye screening gaps in the country and realize the Philippines’ commitment to the Global Elimination of Avoidable Blindness: Vision 2020 – The Right to Sight. We look forward to working closely with our partners to make vision screening an integral part of Healthy Homes, Schools and Workplaces towards Healthy Pilipinas 2040 and ensure the best possible vision for all people and thereby improve quality of life.” said Dr. Beverly Lorraine Ho, Director, Health Promotion Bureau, Department of Health.

“Through the Collaboration to Preserve Sight, we aim to sustain our support for the National Vision Screening

Program signed into law by President Duterte in 2019,” said Dr. Leo Cubillan, Director, Philippine Eye Research Institute (PERI).

“Our program will implement a home vision screening campaign encouraging families during the quarantine to detect simple eye problems at home, then referred to provincial eye centers for further diagnosis and treatment in Tarlac, Quezon, Oriental Mindoro, Antique, Negros Oriental and Surigao del Norte,” said Ms. Mardi Mapa-Suplido, Country Manager, The Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF).

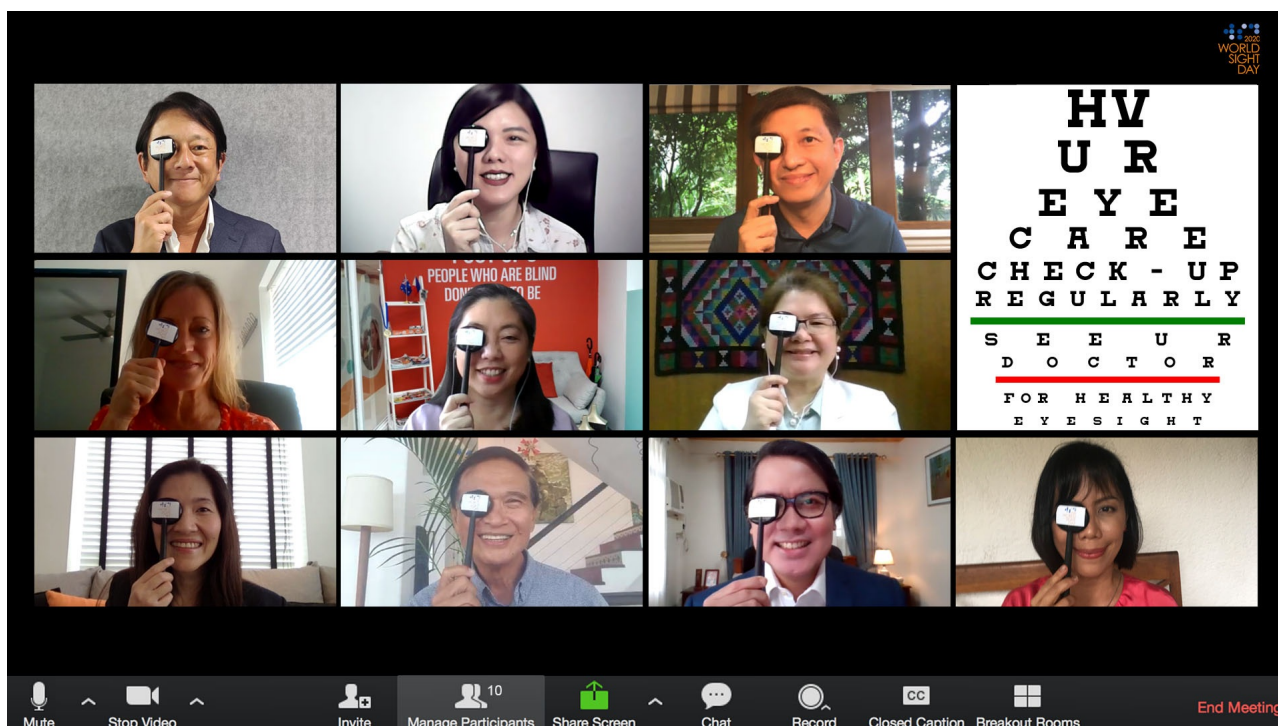
“Diabetic retinopathy is a complication of diabetes and a major cause of blindness among working adults. The Mulat Mata Diabetic Retinopathy Project aims to set-up a comprehensive diabetic retinopathy program consisting of awareness campaigns and education, diabetic retinopathy screening, and data gathering. We will pilot the program at the community level particularly in the province of Bulacan, which we hope to replicate in the other provinces, and eventually at the national level.” said Dr. Marie Joan Loy, President, Vitreo-Retina Society of the Philippines (VRSP).

“We are privileged to support the Collaboration to Preserve Sight through the development and roll-out of a National Eye Health Communications Strategy Plan, the replication of the home vision screening program in a further 10 provinces, and the pilot of an online vision screening program for kindergarten students,” said Dr. Noel Chua, Chairman, National Committee for Sight Preservation (NCSP), a national coalition of organizations.

“Workers should maintain proper distance of at least 20 inches away from the computer monitor. Position the monitor so that the top line of the screen is at or below eye level, and is perpendicular to the window. These are just some of the steps employers and employees can take to promote eye health in the workplace,” said Dr. Ma. Margarita Lat-Luna, President of the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology (PAO).

#wsd2020

#hopeinsight



In celebration of World Sight Day (WSD), Novartis Healthcare Philippines and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness launched the multi-stakeholder “Collaboration to Preserve Sight” to address eye screening gaps in the country. Photo shows participants during the 2020 WSD

virtual media briefing performing the cover test to encourage the general public to have regular eye exams (from top left, clockwise): Mr. Jugo Tsumura, President & Managing Director, Novartis Healthcare Philippines; Dr. Beverly Lorraine Ho, Director, Health Promotion Bureau, Department of Health; Dr. Leo Cubillan, Director, Philippine Eye Research Institute (PERI); Ms. Amanda Davis Chairperson, IAPB Western Pacific; Ms. Mardi Mapa-Suplido, Country Manager, The Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF); Dr. Ma. Margarita Lat-Luna, President of the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology (PAO); Dr. Marie Joan Loy, President, Vitreo-Retina Society of the Philippines (VRSP); Dr. Noel Chua, Chairman, National Committee for Sight Preservation (NCSP); Dr. Peter Paul Ronque, Medical Adviser, Novartis Medical Affairs –Ophthalmology; and Ms. Christine Fajardo; Asia Cluster Patient Advocacy Head & Country Corporate Affairs Head, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

## **About Novartis**

Novartis is reimagining medicine to improve and extend people's lives. As a leading global medicines company, we use innovative science and digital technologies to create transformative treatments in areas of great medical need. In our quest to find new medicines, we consistently rank among the world's top companies investing in research and development. Novartis products reach more than 750 million people globally and we are finding innovative ways to expand access to our latest treatments. About 105,000 people of more than 140 nationalities work at Novartis around the world. Find out more at [www.novartis.com](http://www.novartis.com).

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About the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB)

Founded in 1975, IAPB is the premier eye health body which brings together a unique network of members and membership bodies from across the world. It believes in a world in which no one is needlessly visually impaired, where everyone has access to the best possible standard of eye health; and where those with irreparable vision loss achieve their full potential.

## **About The Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF)**

FHF is a global non-profit aid organization that focuses on treating and preventing blindness and other vision problems. Founded in 1992 by eye surgeon Fred Hollows, the Foundation now works in more than 25 countries including the Philippines and has restored sight to over two and a half million people.

## **About the National Committee for Sight Preservation (NCSP)**

NCSP is a non-profit, non-government umbrella organization of agencies/organizations involved in the prevention of blindness and promotion of eye health in the Philippines.

## **About the Vitreo-Retina Society of the Philippines (VRSP)**

Formed in 1999, VRSP is a subspecialty society affiliated with the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology. Its members are certified by the Philippine Board of Ophthalmology, and have fulfilled the criteria of membership as set forth by the society. Most of the society's members have undergone clinical fellowship training in the subspecialty of diseases and surgery of the retina and vitreous, or have contributed immensely to the advancement of the subspecialty in the Philippines.

## About the Philippine Eye Research Institute (PERI)

PERI was established in 1965 and is the oldest unit under the University of the Philippines-National Institutes of Health (UP-NIH). Its mandate is the prevention and control of eye diseases prevalent in the Philippines.

## About the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology (PAO)

PAO is the internationally-recognized specialty society of ophthalmologists in the Philippines. It aims to ensure access to quality eye care, provided by its competent, qualified members, with the help of other stakeholders.

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## List of links present in page

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