



**VISION 2020 LATIN AMERICA  
Report from January – July 2005**

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## Meetings and Congresses

### February 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>

#### **Vision 2020 Latin America Technical Subcommittees and Assistants to the Co-chairs meeting, Sao Paulo, Brazil.**

This was the first meeting of its kind in our region, and participants included: Dr. Rainald Duerksen (IAPB chairman for Latin America), Dr. Juan Carlos Silva (Vision 2020 Latin America co-chair and director of the prevention of blindness office in PAHO), Dr. Francisco Martinez Castro (Chair of the advocacy and resource mobilization committee as well as APO delegate to Vision 2020 Latin America), Dr. Juan Carlos Serrano (Chair of the childhood blindness committee), Dr. Andrea Zin (Chair of the ROP committee), Dr. Silvia Veitzman (Chair of the low vision committee), Dr. Carlos Arieta (Chair of the cataract committee), Prof. Newton Kara Jose (Chair of the refractive errors committee) and Dr. Van Lansingh (Regional IAPB and Vision 2020 Latin America coordinator).

During this meeting, the personal assistants to each of the chairs held a special gathering, in which they were debriefed about the objectives and goals of Vision 2020, since most of them were relatively new to this field. This allowed for each one of them to have private conversations and it will surely enhance communication in the future.

The meeting was conducted in a very relaxed environment, in which each chair person presented a situational analysis of their subcommittee on a country by country basis, and an action plan. One of the issues discussed was a list of indicators to monitor implementation of Vision 2020 activities, which were later discussed with Dr. Ivo Kocur on a different date during a CEH course in Peru. Amongst the main results that could be mentioned, was the beginning of a directory of Vision 2020 contact people for each one of the technical committees in order to enhance data collection and implementation of programmes, of which ROP and low vision have developed quite extraordinarily as of the date of this report. The draft of the action plan for each subcommittee was also discussed, and the final document was to be reviewed in the scheduled meeting in Chile.



**March 17<sup>th</sup>****IAPB Latin America 2<sup>nd</sup> Executive Committee Meeting, Santiago, Chile, during the biannual PAAO meeting.**

Participants included: Dr. Rainald Duerksen (Chairman), Dr. Hugo Nano (Co-chair), Dr. Juan Batlle (Co-chair), Dr. Everardo Barojas (Co-chair), Dr. Serge Resnikoff (WHO coordinator of chronic diseases and health promotion), Dr. Van Lansingh (Regional Coordinator) and Mrs. Maria Eugenia Nano (Co-chair of the monitoring subcommittee of Vision 2020 Latin America).

Dr. Rainald Duerksen explained to all of those in attendance the new IAPB structure which was presented in the General Assembly of Dubai in September 2004, and the confirmation of all the existing co-chairs took place, including that of Prof. Newton Kara Jose and Dr. Virgilio Galvis who had tendered their apology due to previous engagements. Dr. Juan Batlle also recommended developing mechanisms for the renewal or election of co-chairs in the future to be discussed in the next IAPB LA executive committee meeting in June of 2006 in Colombia.

The meeting was adjourned after the announcement that Dr. Everardo Barojas and Dr. Louis Pizzarello will be the coordinators of the IAPB General Assembly to be held in Cancun, Mexico, in 2008.

**March 17<sup>th</sup>****6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LARWG, Santiago, Chile, during the biannual PAAO meeting.**

In addition to all the above mentioned participants, we were also honored with the presence of Dr. Carlos Arieta, Prof. Newton Kara Jose, Dr. Harry Brown (Chairman of SEE International), Dr. Juan Carlos Silva, Dr. Joan McLeod (ORBIS country director for Latin America), Dr. Silvia Veitzman, Dr. Felipe Chiriboga (CBM advisor and member of the cataract technical committee), Dr. Francisco Contreras (president of the prevention of blindness committee of the PAAO and Vision 2020 Latin America co-chair), Dr. Ramachandra Pararajasegaram (WHO), Dr. Fernando Barria (president of the Vision 2020 Chile committee), Mrs. Irene Rivadeneira (CBM regional office for South America), Ms. Linda Arendes (CBM regional office for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean), Dr. Celia Nakanami (representing Dr. Juan Carlos Serrano and Dr. Andrea Zin), Dr. Karin Casasola (Vision 2020 Guatemala committee), Dr. Karen Seidman (Vice president of continued education, Lighthouse International) and Dr. Magally Hernandez de Belisario (Vice president of a National Public Eye Institute in Venezuela).

During the meeting, the following organizations requested to become official members of Vision 2020 Latin America: "Instituto Popular para los Ojos Dr. F. Belisario-Navarro" headed by Dr. Magally Hernandez de Belisario, Lighthouse International, CONAVIP (National Vision 2020 Paraguay Committee) and "Fundacion Ulls del Mon" (Eyes of the World Foundation from Spain). After deliberation, they were all accepted and welcomed.

Those in attendance recommended that the project of “Fundacion Oftalmologica del Valle in Ecuador”, headed by Dr. Felipe Chiriboga, to train ophthalmic nurses and technicians, be accepted as an officially endorsed Vision 2020 LA programme, and therefore actively seek funding from ORBIS International via the regional office through a proposal to be presented later in the year.

All the technical committee chairs of Vision 2020 LA presented their situational analysis and major recommendations as an action plan. The highlights are as follows: 1) ROP will be used to spearhead actions concerning childhood blindness in the region which still encounters many difficulties for implementation, primarily due to the lack of adequate remuneration for services rendered. 2) Barriers to cataract surgery and other eye related services are not always of financial nature, but of ignorance regarding the availability of these, therefore the results of the RACSS conducted in the region should be used as an advocacy tool and help develop interest of the National Societies of Ophthalmology to monitor and keep record of key indicators. 3) Due to the raising costs associated with diabetes and the complications found, Dr. Serge Resnikoff suggested that a diabetic retinopathy committee could be started in our region. 4) Since obtaining reliable data in our region is very difficult, mechanisms in order to use available data and how to make them official will be discussed by Dr. Van Lansingh with Dr. Ivo Kocur. 5) Based on the gained experience by CBM's country concept papers (CCP), it is recommended that further planning and strategy documents of Vision 2020 LA use these ideas to further support recommended strategies. 6) The request by Colombia to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Iberoamerican Vision 2020 congress in June 2006 was unanimously accepted.

### **June 29<sup>th</sup>**

#### **XI Prevention of Blindness Congress, Trujillo, Peru**

From June 29<sup>th</sup> until July 1<sup>st</sup>, Peru celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Regional Ophthalmology Meeting and the 11<sup>th</sup> National Prevention of Blindness Congress, in which Dr. J. Velazco (President of the National Committee for the Prevention of Blindness), Dr. Nancy Olivares (Ministry of Health), Dr. Jorge Alvarez (President of the Peruvian Society of Ophthalmology) signed a letter in which all the interested parties have committed to work together to develop the National Eye Health Plan, inspired in the results of the recently conducted CEH Course (16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> of June). The established committee meets every week and it is expected that towards the end of the year, the plan will be officially presented.

### **New Vision 2020 or Prevention of Blindness Committees**

### **January 31st**

#### **Official launching of the Vision 2020 Committee in Chile**

As stated in the last quarterly report 2004, Chile presented the draft of Constitution of its Vision 2020 Committee and their National Eye Health Plan, which were officially endorsed and launched in January 2005, ensuring long term funding from the government for cataract surgical services as well as diabetic retinopathy, ROP and refractive errors in children.



**April 5<sup>th</sup>**

**National Committee on Prevention and Treatment of Eye Diseases in Mexico.**

After the advocacy visit to Mexico City conducted by Dr. Rainald Duerksen, Prof. Newton Kara José and Dr. David Yorston in 2003, Dr. Everardo Barojas as well as the past and current president of the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology (Dr. Raul Suarez and Dr. Jorge Villar respectively), have been instrumental in lobbying the government represented by Dr. Julio Frenk (Deputy Minister of Health), resulting on the above mentioned committee working under the guidelines set forth by Vision 2020 by a Presidential decree of President Vicente Fox.

This committee is formed by the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology, Gonzalo Rio Arronte Foundation, TELMEX Foundation, TELEVISA Foundation, representatives of the three largest ophthalmology teaching Hospitals in Mexico City (Asociacion Para Evitar la Ceguera en Mexico, Fundacion Conde de Valenciana y Hospital Nuestra Senora de la Luz), the National Prevention of Blindness Committee (Dr. Everardo Barojas) and various other representatives of private and public institutions. Initially the committee has a fund of 4,5 million USD to supply low cost IOLs and other consumables, as well as a surgeons fee in four states and the periphery of Mexico City.

**June 9<sup>th</sup>**

**Vision 2020 Committee in Costa Rica officially launched.**

On this date, this committee was inaugurated, and the nominated officers are: Dr. Cesar Gamboa (General Director of Health of the Ministry of Health), Dr. Joaquin Martinez and Dr. Javier Cordoba from the Costa Rican Ophthalmology Association and with PAAO representation, Dr. Daisy Hernandez (Optometrist), Ms. Rebecca Villalobos (ASEMBIS Director, one of the largest eye NGOs in the country), Mr. Gerald Mory (Costa Rica Lions Club Governor) and Mr. Jorge Serendero (President of the Santo Domingo Scientific Society). This committee has been meeting on a regular basis and their plans are to develop a National Eye Health Plan in the short run as well as conducting a RACSS study as soon as possible with input from PAHO.

## June 2005

### **The Prevention of Blindness National Committee of the Dominican Republic is sworn in by President Leonel Fernandez.**

On its inauguration, Dr. Juan Batlle was installed as its first president and Dr. Rachel Alburquerque as its vice-president. It works in close relationship with the Ministry of Health and the office of the First Lady in order to conduct weekend campaigns to detect blind people in isolated parts of the country, with the extraordinary support of the Lions Club and other foundations continuing the idea of "Mega Projects" which had been conducted in the past, performing over 1,500 surgeries per year in low income people. This newly formed committee will also help identify and treat as well as refer patients to tertiary centers when needed (cataract, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and refractive errors), particularly to the Hospital Dr. Elias Santana, headed by Dr. Juan Batlle.



As an example, in the last project conducted in July of this year, in just one weekend, 6,555 patients were examined, with 610 cases of cataract and 273 of glaucoma detected; all of them operated on at the Hospital Dr. Elias Santana with great success. Similar projects will be conducted throughout the years to come, and will include in some cases, the support of invited guests from Duke University as well as Yale University.

Dr. Juan Batlle informs us, that the main objective in the short term is to include other official and private institutions to enhance the impact of the activities of this Committee and sign a Vision 2020 agreement with WHO and IAPB to ensure adequate technical input.

## CEH Courses

### **January 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>**

#### **CEH and ROP Workshop, Bogota, Colombia.**

This course was specifically tailored for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year ophthalmology residents and chairperson of seven residency training programmes (21 participants from various major cities) in Colombia, and promoted by ICEH, PAHO-WHO, CBM, LCIF, IAPB and Vision 2020. The faculty was very diverse, both in nationality and subspecialty training, including Dr. David Yorston, Dr. Andrea Zin, Dr. Rainald Duerksen, Dr. Felipe Chiriboga, Dr. Martin Ruppenthal,

Ms. Irene Rivadeneira, Dr. Juan Carlos Silva, Dr. Juan Carlos Serrano, Dr. David Medina, Dr. Felipe Escallon, Dr. Lucia Moncada, Dr. Francisco Rodriguez and Dr. Maria Fernanda Delgado.

The aim of the course was not to enforce certain strategies, rather to create awareness about Community Eye Health and Vision 2020 which was quite evidently lacking, including from other people who attended the course due to the strong publicity conducted prior to the course.

One of the lessons learned was that although this course was conducted at the same time as a larger ophthalmology meeting in the same venue and it probably increased the number of potential participants, we also noted that competing, perhaps more “interesting” talks in the afternoon session actually resulted in many people arriving late or simply not turning up.

The ROP workshop was also attended by several presidents of different scientific associations and six insurance companies, encouraging the sharing of information as well as data analysis, and establishing a working group that continues to meet with the input of the two largest referral centers (Hospital Simon Bolivar y Hospital El Tunal) as well as the neonatologists association and Fundonal. The aim of this group is to increase awareness, collect and analyze data, disseminate information and in the mid term, to find subsidies and sustainable methods of payment by insurance companies. The so called Bogota ROP working group has the technical support of PAHO-WHO as well as the technical and financial support by CBM and LCIF in order to develop a suitable action plan. Needless to say, the course and the working sessions are difficult due to different professional profiles as well as professional jealousy or lack of interest.

### **May 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Venezuela, Caracas.**

This was a “traditional” CEH Course, sponsored by CBM, PAHO-WHO and IAPB-Vision 2020. The international faculty included Dr. Rainald Duerksen, Dr. Juan Carlos Silva, Dr. Felipe Chiriboga, Dr. Juan Carlos Serrano and Ms. Lisa MacDonald with important local input from Dr. Felipe Siso (National Eye Health Programme Director from the Ministry of Health) as well as that of Dr. Alejandro Rubin (President of the Venezuela Society of Ophthalmology) and Dr. Magally Hernandez de Belisario.

The Course was very successful in creating awareness and in promoting the undoubtedly sometimes difficult conversations between the Ophthalmology Society and the Ministry of Health. However, thanks to the help of the international facilitators, the Ministry of Health requested that the Ophthalmology Society formed an advisory group to aid in the technical component of the National Eye Health Plan as it currently stands for 2005 and to further develop the one for 2006-2007 based on the National RACSS results of last year and with the following aims: 1) Education and awareness for ophthalmologists, 2) Public promotion by celebrating World Sight Day and 3) Designing specific protocols for cataract, refractive errors, childhood blindness and diabetic retinopathy.

It is certainly worthwhile noting that some national and international facilitators have the sense that current government policies make it difficult to work with IAPB or Vision 2020 guidelines, and many colleagues in the region have expressed their concern for active promotion of free eye health services paid by the Venezuelan Government and conducted in Cuba, at least in Paraguay and in Bolivia.

**May 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>**  
**Peru, Chaclacayo.**

This was the first workshop of its type held in Peru and organized by the Peruvian Society of Ophthalmology, financed by CBM and ICEH and promoted by PAHO-WHO, CBM, IAPB and Vision 2020. The international faculty was formed by Dr. Felipe Chiriboga, Dr. Aravind Srinivasan, Dr. Juan Carlos Silva, Dr. Ivo Kocur, Dr. Silvia Veitzman and Dr. Van Lansingh. The local faculty was Dr. Rosario Espinoza, Dr. Francisco Contreras, Dr. Jorge Velazco, Dr. Luz Gordillo and others. Ms. Lisa Macdonald and Mrs. Irene Rivadeneira representing CBM LARO also participated as facilitators.

There were a total of 56 participants from different Peruvian departments and other countries. The participants found the cost recovery and administration talks of Dr. Aravind very helpful, particularly social marketing, differential prices to cover the costs of non paying patients and better use of existing human and "hardware" (facilities and equipment) resources.

It is worthwhile noting that, based on consensus amongst the participants, the estimated prevalence of blindness in the country is of 0,5% therefore, approximately 140,000 people are blind, and of these, 50% are due to cataract. The CSR is 890 for the entire country with obvious striking differences between Lima, the capital city, and other less developed regions.

One can not stress strongly enough that this was the first forum in which the INO (National Institute of Ophthalmology), the Peruvian Prevention of Blindness Committee (CONAPRECE), the National Society of Ophthalmology, the Social Security Institute and the Ministry of Health found a common ground with the help of the facilitators. Serious, often very long sessions were conducted in which the first drafts of specific diseases were developed between all the parties and that eventually will be included in the National Eye Health Plan.

In this meeting Dr. Ivo Kocur, Dr. Juan Carlos Silva and Dr. Van Lansingh held a series of private talks in which it was agreed that for indicators to be monitored on a regular basis, it was best to have a consensus between PAHO-WHO and IAPB Latin America with data provided by the Ministries of Health and/or the National Societies of Ophthalmology in order to be considered official. If these criteria are not met, officially the data will be listed as "NA".

**July 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>**  
**Mozambique, Maputo.**

There were a total of 40 participants representing all the provinces in the country, with the aim of setting the first steps towards the development of a

comprehensive National Eye Care Plan, in a more relaxed and friendly environment. It was felt that in the past there had been great mistrust between the Ministry of Health and some NGOs. This meeting appears to have broken that impasse with the help of the international faculty, amongst them, Dr. Carlos Arieta.

### Other Courses

#### **June 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>**

##### **Low Vision specialists training, Caracas, Venezuela**

It was conducted by Dr. Belkis Leon, with input of Dr. Lourdes Medina, both members of the low vision committee of Vision 2020 Latin America, following the "Uppsala model" with technical support by ICEVI and local facilitators of 2 local projects (Proyecto Miren and Proyecto Ensenando a Construir Vision).

It was addressed therefore to a multidisciplinary audience which included ophthalmologists, optometrists and rehabilitators from Venezuela and Guatemala.

#### **June 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>**

##### **Low Vision Training Course for Ophthalmology Residents, Santiago, Chile.**

This course was conducted by Dr. Silvia Veitzman as the main speaker with a national faculty composed by Dr. Raul Gonzalez (COALIVI or Visually Handicapped Help Cooperation for its acronym in Spanish), Dr. Fernando Barria, Dr. Juan Verdaguer (Foundation Los Andes, Santiago) as well as vision rehabilitation specialist Patricia Ramos (COALIVI). It was primarily addressed to residents of ophthalmology all across the country, but we also had members of other eye care related organizations, with a total of 55 people in attendance, through the generous support and technical input of CBM, PAHO-WHO, IAPB-Vision 2020, the National Society of Ophthalmology, COALIVI, FOAL (ONCE Foundation for Latin America) and a local ophthalmic laboratory.

Most of the participants found the course very helpful, particularly the topics of prevention and rehabilitation through the clinical cases presented in videos. It is hoped that the end result will be the inclusion of low vision as part of the curricula for residency training programmes in due course.

#### **July 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>**

##### **Evaluation and Planning, Riobamba, Ecuador.**

Dr. Martin Ruppenthal, CBM regional representative for South America, informs us that 10 CBM supported partners in Ecuador held a meeting with the president of the National Society of Ophthalmology (Quito chapter) in order to develop evaluation and planning tools. These projects all over the country currently perform 25% of the entire national cataract surgical volume.

## Other Developments

**May 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Dr. Miriam Cano, president of the Paraguay Vision 2020 Committee, is awarded a scholarship to begin her MSC in Community Eye Health in London, sponsored by ORBIS and the ICEH commencing September 2006.**

Dr. Cano is highly regarded in the region, and is also immediate past-president of the Paraguayan National Society of Ophthalmology as well as current chief Ophthalmologist of IPS, the National Social Service Institute of Paraguay. We are sure that her skills will help to further develop the CEH activities in the future in Paraguay.

**June 2005**

**Launching of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarterly Vision 2020 Latin America Bulletin.**

This is an important milestone coordinated by Dr. Francisco Martinez Castro as an integral part of the Advocacy committee, with its first edition in Spanish and future numbers to include the English and Portuguese translations to enhance its distribution and potential use, which is distributed via e-mail or can be accessed on our web page [www.v2020la.org](http://www.v2020la.org)

It features an editorial, an international news and a collaborating NGOs section as well as information on upcoming courses and activities, etc.

**June 2005**

**Dr. Felipe Chiriboga writes the case study of the CEH Journal.**

Dr. Chiriboga is head of the Fundacion Oftalmologica del Valle, in Yaruqui, about 30 minutes drive from Quito, the capital city of Ecuador. It is a CBM sponsored project, which has also received support from other developing agencies such as BMZ (German agency for project development) and German Lions Club. Due to its extraordinary success in training paramedical personnel, increased surgical output with appropriate technology concepts, as well as cost recovery strategies, it was included as a case study with the title: "Yaruqui-Ecuador: An ongoing district VISION 2020 programme".

**June 6<sup>th</sup>**

**"Programa Vision Solidaria" launches its campaign to eliminate blindness due to cataract by the year 2012 in El Chaco, Argentina.**

This is a CBM sponsored project, headed by Dr. Jorge Kleisinger, in a quite isolated, dry and economically deprived area of north east Argentina. This very ambitious plan has been developed and implemented in partnership with the local Lutheran Church as well as with the local health district and municipal authorities with strong IAPB LA input. The gala event counted amongst its guests and speakers with Dr. Hugo Nano, Mrs. Maria Eugenia Nano, Mrs. Irene Rivadeneira and Dr. Van Lansingh. Full details of this project will soon be available through the official publication of the Argentinean Council of Ophthalmology, and it is hoped that it can serve as a catalyst for other groups in the country to formulate and implement similar proposals.



### **June 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Prevention of Blindness curricula promotion in Brazil.**

Dr. Rainald Duerksen and Dr. Martin Ruppenthal conducted an advocacy visit to 6 selected large training ophthalmology centres in order to promote formal inclusion of PBL and CEH concepts as part of the curricula. A follow up visit for this purpose is planned for early October and will be reinforced with a CEH course with the participation of Prof. Allen Foster and Dr. David Yorston.

### **June 17<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Establishment of the diabetic retinopathy committee within Vision 2020 Latin America.**

Following up on the recommendation of Dr. Serge Resnikoff in the Vision 2020 LARWG meeting in March 2005 in Chile, the committee was formally announced and is headed by Dr. Francisco Martinez Castro due to his experience and interest in the area (he is also the president elect of the Mexican Diabetes Federation). The aims and action plan will be announced in our next report.

### **July 2005**

#### **Vision 2020 and IAPB are featured in special pages of "Medico Oftalmologo", the official magazine of the Argentinean Council of Ophthalmology.**

In the July 2005 edition of this prestigious magazine, both Mrs. Maria Eugenia Nano and Dr. Van Lansingh contributed with a couple of pages introducing Community Eye Health concepts as well as the background and recent achievements of Vision 2020, in order to create awareness and stimulate the participation of Argentinean professionals in this field, particularly making use of World Sight Day as a useful advocacy tool. The articles will soon be available on the following webpage: [www.oftalmologos.org.ar/mo](http://www.oftalmologos.org.ar/mo)