

HelpMeSee and USAID partner to train new cataract specialists to provide surgical care for India's cataract blind

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MUMBAI, India, July 27, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, HelpMeSee has announced a new partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) Initiative to train 100 new cataract specialists to help restore sight to India's cataract blind. Through this agreement, ASHA has provided funding to deploy two HelpMeSee eye surgery simulators to facilitate training at the HelpMeSee Mumbai Centre of Excellence for Simulation-Based Training.

Currently, untreated cataract is the cause of 66 percent of all blindness in India, according to the National Blindness and Visual Impairment Survey. India has approximately 20,000 ophthalmologists, equating to an average of eight for every million people, which is considerably lower in comparison with higher-income economies. This is compounded by the fact that ophthalmologists are not equally distributed throughout the nation. The cataract blind and visually impaired face significant challenges in finding well-trained specialists to treat them.



HelpMeSee and USAID: a partnership focused on restoring the gift of sight for people blind or visually impaired due to cataract.

"The National Medical Commission, India, and The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education share a common goal – to improve patient safety and surgical outcomes through competency-based education as a key component of Best Practices in Medicine," said Saro Jahani, president and CEO of HelpMeSee. "HelpMeSee's simulation-based training brings this innovation to life in India, through technology that allows trainees to practice surgical steps to perfection in a virtual environment with no risks to a live patient. We value our partnership with ASHA as we work together to help restore sight for people in India who are blind due to cataract. With their commitment, we're working to build sustainable solutions that can change lives and restore sight for people suffering from cataract.

"For people with treatable cataract blindness, the humanitarian impact of this work cannot be overstated," Jahani said. "Untreated cataract disproportionately impacts the lives of women in rural India. Restoring sight restores their ability to engage in economic opportunities and relieves family members to work full time. The gift of restored sight is priceless. We are proud to be part of this effort

to ensure access to care. HelpMeSee's simulator offers full procedural training in Manual Small Incision Cataract Surgery, as well as complications management and suturing. We have recently launched training in Phacoemulsification. In near future, HelpMeSee will be able to offer training in anterior vitrectomy, pediatric cataract, and other surgical procedures for the eye."

In India, HelpMeSee has established partnerships with LV Prasad Eye Institute in Hyderabad to train government hospital doctors and Aravind Eye Hospitals in Madurai, empowering local communities to restore sight.

"HelpMeSee's virtual reality, simulation-based training delivers the authentic feeling of touch and visuals that are experienced in live surgery, and the ability to practice over and over, without the risk of mistakes that could permanently damage the sight of a patient," explained HelpMeSee Chief Medical Officer Dr. Van Lansingh. "The technology has applications for both the higher-income economies and the developing world as the next generation of cataract specialists is trained to deliver care for the rapidly aging world population. Seasoned surgeons who have had limited access to live surgery can use it to keep skills fresh."

ABOUT HELPMESSEE

In a world where 100 million people are blind or visually impaired due to cataract, HelpMeSee works to eradicate cataract blindness using virtual reality and simulation-based training. The nonprofit was founded by Al and Jim Ueltschi, who saw the opportunity to end suffering by delivering innovation from the aviation industry to the fight against cataract blindness. As co-founder of Orbis International and founder of FlightSafety International, Al Ueltschi was an icon in the aviation industry, devoted to treating preventable blindness in the developing world. Today, his legacy lives on through HelpMeSee. The organization trains cataract specialists to ensure that all communities, especially those with severe economic hardship, have access to cataract treatment as a human right to sight. With more than 40 simulators and 11 training centers worldwide, HelpMeSee partners with governments, universities, and innovators to fight the global cataract blindness crisis. For more information, visit

<http://www.helpmeseesee.org>.

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