CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION FOR CORNEAL DONATION BETWEEN LIONS EYE BANK SAAR-LOR-LUX, TRIER/WESTPfalz IN HOMBURG/Saar AND LUXEMBOURG

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Purpose With the increasing demand for corneas, eye banks must optimize and extend their sources of tissue donation. On the other hand, corneal transplantation is a specialized procedure performed in hospitals with high quality standards and ideally an integrated eye bank. In this report we would like to focus on an international win-win-win agreement between the Department of Ophthalmology at Saarland University Medical Center (Homburg/Saar, Germany), the LIONS Eye Bank Saar-Lor-Lux, Trier/Westpfalz, Saarland University Medical Center (UKS) and the four major non-university hospitals without corneal transplantation competence in Luxembourg.

Methods In 2012, at the initiative of the Luxembourgish Ministry of Health and Department of Ophthalmology (Homburg/Saar, Germany), an international agreement was established with the Centre Hospitalier du Luxembourg (Luxembourg). Administrative and legislative rules were developed. Luxembourgish nursing personnel attended a practical training program for corneal excision at the Department of Ophthalmology in Homburg/Saar allowing them to harvest the two first corneal donors on site by themselves during the first year. In the following years two more hospitals, the Centre Hospitalier Emile Mayrisch (Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg) and the Hôpitaux Robert Schuman (Kirchberg, Luxembourg), joined the cooperation.

Results From 2012 until 2021, three hospitals in Luxembourg donated 779 corneas to the LIONS Eye Bank of the Saarland University Medical Center in Homburg/Saar (Germany). In return, 308 Luxembourgish patients have received a corneal transplantation at the Department of Ophthalmology in Homburg/Saar. In 2022, the extension continued and an agreement with a fourth hospital in Luxembourg at the Centre Hospitalier du Nord (Ettelbruck, Luxembourg) was signed providing even more donations.

Conclusion The cross-border collaboration for corneal donation and patient treatment has proven to be successful with both numbers of harvested donors and transplanted patients rising. However, international legislation for tissue donation needs to be accurately respected and a quality management system established to provide continuous quality of the donor tissue.

INDO – GERMAN GIZ COLLABORATION – IMPACT AND WAY FORWARD IN GLOBAL EYE BANKING

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Purpose It is estimated that globally there are more than 12.7 million corneal blinds with the vast majority of those living in the developing world. There is huge demand for corneal transplants worldwide as currently only one out of 70 patients can be provided with a cornea.

Following the spirit of EEBA in bringing together the international eye banking community we present on our efforts and vision in contributing to the elimination of avoidable blindness in Africa by promoting sustainable eye donation programs.

Methods At the congress of the South African Tissue Bank Association (SATiBA) in November 2022 a dedicated Round Table Discussion takes place on eye donation in Africa, organized by the World Union of Tissue Banking Associations (WUTBA) together with the Global Alliance of Eye Bank Associations (GAEBA), SATiBA and the German Society for Tissue Transplantation (DGFG). Individuals, national and global players in tissue medicine meet aiming to promote and advocate corneal donation in sub-Saharan Africa to establish patient care that is self-sustaining from within the countries.

In preparation for the meeting a questionnaire was completed by the participants to understand the current situation in individual countries: Responses by ophthalmologists, tissue bankers, awareness and tissue donation coordinators from Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and South Africa were evaluated.

Results The survey revealed that all countries are establishing national health acts with references to tissue donation or have them in place with regulations still to be detailed. These are fundamental to strengthen confidence in tissue donation and to start developing donation infrastructures. In all countries there is doubt about donation after death showing the need for advocacy towards the public.

The aim of the Round Table is creating a momentum of networking and sharing experience to support the African countries in building local infrastructures and becoming independent from tissue imports in the future.

Conclusion What frameworks must exist to successfully establish donation programs in Africa? What help can be provided by countries and organizations that have stable donation programs? These and other questions will be attempted at the Round Table. Bringing together experts, bundling synergies, and creating a momentum to promote cornea donation on social, political, and community level will be a step towards the vision of creating a world in which nobody is needlessly visually impaired.
P26-A125 DONATION MEDICINE: A CHANGE OF PARADIGM IN PROCURING OCULAR TISSUES FOR TRANSPLANTATION

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Purpose To reflect on the implementation of the concept of ‘Donation Medicine’ as a substitute for ‘Procurement’ to describe the Foundation’s activities in the procurement of ocular tissue and donor selection, considering that the prevailing connotation of procurement (the action of obtaining materials, goods and services necessary to the functioning of a productive activity) did not express satisfactorily all the social, human and medical implications of a programme aimed at promoting ocular tissue donation and recovery. Moreover, in medicine the term ‘Procurement’ is generally associated with the worst therapeutic outcome, which is the end of a human life.

Methods A retrospective evaluation of the main indicators pertaining to activities in 2021 was performed, with particular regard to donor screening, tissue recovery, and the human and professional relations with donor families and hospital staff. The results were assessed by an interdisciplinary team, composed of eye bank and healthcare personnel, regulators and experts in medical humanities.

Results In 2021, in light of 2944 non-oppositions to donation (opting out system), 891 consultations of the national SIT donor registry were performed (Sistema Informativo Trapianti), with 2551 clinical charts reviewed, 4332 related phone consultations performed, and 2032 nasopharyngeal swabs for SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid tested; as a consequence, 2213 condolence and gratitude letters were sent to donor families, of which 57%(1269) conveyed the outcome of donation, along with 115 gratitude letters sent in instances of the non-recovery. 24 families requested, and were granted, the opportunity to visit the eye bank.

Conclusion A consensus was reached on the evidence that the term ‘Procurement’ has obvious limitations in the long term nurturing and maintenance of the motivation of the eye bank and healthcare personnel. As a consequence, the concept of ‘Donation Medicine’ was implemented to define and develop the activities related to the promotion of donation, the recovery of ocular tissues for transplantation, and internal/external relations with healthcare personnel, thus changing the meaning of ‘Procurement’, from a process at the end of a life to the realization of a new pathway of care that takes into account both donor families and recipients. Donation medicine begins with the re-opening of the donor clinical chart, the interaction with donor relatives and the recovery of a precious gift for use in the restoration of sight of patients.