



# TOF NEWS!



Dr. David Sullivan, Acheampong Oppong and Dr. Maria Markoulli

## THE OPTICAL FOUNDATION'S FRANS OOSTERHOF TRAVEL GRANT

The Optical Foundation aims to make eye care accessible in Ghana through screenings, education and research. We believe that educating the next generation of Ghanaian Optometrists is key to this vision. In order to be at the cutting edge of eye research, Optometrists worldwide attend international conferences - an experience not normally afforded to Ghanaian Optometrists.

Therefore we raised AUD 2117,50 for the Frans Oosterhof Travel Grant to support a Ghanaian Optometry student to attend the 2016 Tear Film and Ocular Surface (TFOS) conference in France. The Frans Oosterhof Travel Grant honors the memory and work for The Optical Foundation of Frans Oosterhof. The grant was awarded to Acheampong Oppong, a 5th year optometry student from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. The beautiful letter Acheampong has written to express how much attending the TFOS conference has meant to him is displayed below in this newsletter.



Acheampong Oppong at TFOS, Montpellier, France



Acheampong Oppong and Dr. Maria Markoulli



## GLASSES FOR THE CHILDREN IN ESSIAM

In December 2015 The Optical Foundation and the University of Cape Coast (UCC) teamed up for another collaborative screening project. Organized by Francis Wiredu one of UCC's students, this two day screening gave 11 optometry students the opportunity to conduct eye tests on 301 children (4 – 17 years of age), under supervision from a clinical lecturer from UCC. Fortunately most children had healthy eyes. However, thanks to the screening we were able to provide 25 children with corrective glasses. Early 2016 the glasses were ready and distributed to the children, which resulted in a lot of happy children.



## WORLD SIGHT DAY – GARY, INDIANA

Our chair, Carolina Kunnen, travelled to Indiana to provide free vision tests to elementary school students and youth baseball players from Gary, Indiana for World Sight Day 2016. The vision event was a collaborative initiative from Our Children's Vision and the Baseball Players Trust, which partnered up with The Optical Foundation, Illinois Eye Institute Princeton Vision Clinic, Indiana University College of Optometry, Illinois College of Optometry, Moses Eyecare and Benavente Eyecare to make the event possible. Former Major Leaguers LaTroy Hawkins and Kenny Lofton assisted with the eye testing and participated in question and answer sessions with the youth. Together, we tested almost 200 pairs of eyes and provided 54 children with glasses.



Kenny Lofton, Dr. Carolina Kunnen, Pamela Capaldi, LaTroy Hawkins, Dr. Kavin Naidoo, Sharmayne McKinley and Dr. Luigi Bilotto

# PREPARATIONS FOR GAMBIA

In 2016 we raised €3,705 to provide eye testing for 2000 children in Gambia.

The Optical Foundation's focus has always been on Ghana, so you may ask yourself: Why Gambia? The origin of this Gambia initiative started over 14 years ago when Huub Villevoeye (one of our board members) and his wife visited Gambia for the first time on a holiday. On this trip they befriended a local police officer and his wife who is teacher at the primary school in Serrekunda. Ever since becoming a board member of The Optical Foundation, Huub had always envisaged the foundation conducting eye screenings for the children in this town. In always wanting to be supportive of our board members' initiatives The Optical Foundation went in search of an organization that is experienced in short term eye screening projects. We found the Dutch foundation 'Stichting Zienderogen Nederland' to partner up with in 2017 and Huub will finally see the children of Serrekunda primary school getting this eye care.



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## THE TEAM

The Optical Foundation wouldn't be anything without its volunteers that make all the magic happen. Our board members are spread out all over the world (USA, the Netherlands, Australia, Norway), but there is a small window in which everyone is awake and that is when we meet. We would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and all the best for 2017!



**THE OPTICAL FOUNDATION WISHES EVERYONE A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND ALL THE BEST FOR 2017!**

# LETTER FROM ACHEAMPONG OPPONG

Dear Sponsor,

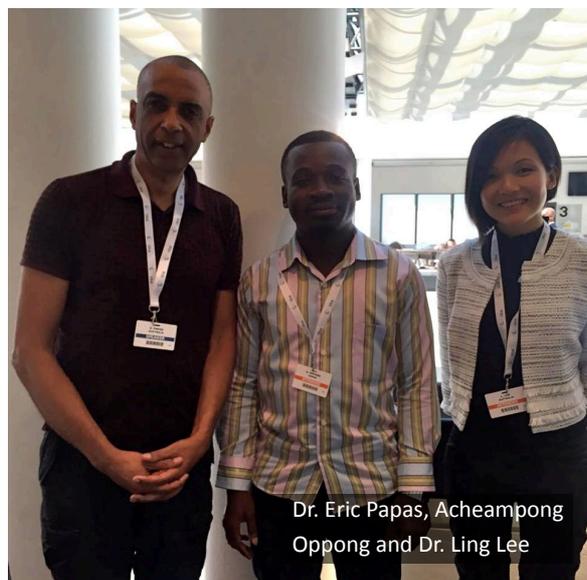
I am much honored to have been selected as the recipient of the 2016 Frans Oosterhof travel grant award to attend the Tear Film and Ocular Surface (TFOS) Conference in Montpellier, France. I am writing to thank you for generous financial support.

I am an undergraduate Optometry student currently in my sixth year at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and hope to graduate in the summer of 2017 with the hope of entering private optometric practice. I believe being in a private practice will give me the independence to ensure that all my patients get the time and quality of care that they deserve at a price they can afford, which is mostly not the case in many health centers in my home country. I have skills and competence in external eye examination, retinal examination, refraction, and slit lamp examination

One fascinating thing about attending this conference was that it was my first time traveling outside Africa, notwithstanding the trip was very exciting. France is a beautiful country with lots of tall and antique buildings and good transportation systems.

French cuisine is considered to be one of the world's most refined and elegant styles of cooking and I experienced this firsthand. The French are warm and welcoming; the hotelier at where I lodged was very receptive and friendly despite the communication barrier. Our conversations were very amusing to behold.

The conference itself was very useful and educative. It ran from the 7th to 10th of September, 2016 with two different sessions each day; oral presentations from keynote speakers and poster sessions. There were coffee/tea and lunch breaks to keep us awake and our energies high.



Dr. Eric Papas, Acheampong Oppong and Dr. Ling Lee

The Corum provided the conference a perfect venue with its cutting-edge facilities and spacious conference room. Measures were also put in place to ensure the safety of each attendee.

I had the opportunity to meet a lot of academicians, seasoned clinicians, and researches. I was fortunate enough to meet all but one of the names I heard of one way or the other before the conference; David A. Sullivan, Maria Markoulli, Amy Gallant Sullivan, and Ling Lee. Unfortunately, Carolina Kunnen could not attend the conference, but for consolation I had seen



Acheampong Oppong and Dr. Maria Markoulli

her when she last visited Ghana with Eric B. Papas. I was very enthused to have met some Africans namely Abayomi B. Ogundele and Kovin Naidoo at the conference.

The topics and research works presented at the conference were very intriguing. Getting to know more about tear, its constituents, its interaction with the ocular surface and contact lens, and how it can be defective as well as how the ocular surface itself can be shielded to prevent or ameliorate dryness was all very fulfilling.

The topic on unique challenges and unmet needs for the treatment of ocular surface diseases in various regions of the world was something I could really relate with. It presented the accomplishments made by eye care professionals in the treatment of ocular surface diseases and how much more there is to be done in other to ensure effective treatment and rehabilitation of ocular morbidity.

The experience on the whole was very gratifying, and the tremendous impact will last for a lifetime. I hope to be able to further my education after my undergraduate program in Optometry. This I believe will go a long way to enriching and enhancing me as an optometrist and as a person. I hope to contribute my quota in cutting-edge research towards understanding, preventing and treating various ocular conditions.

Optometry in Ghana could be a lot better if students could have hands on experience with various optometric equipments during their training, however, this is not so because of the inadequate equipments at our disposal. I believe donation of optometric equipments and materials to the two optometry schools in Ghana will help improve the condition. Having volunteers with expertise in the field of optometry will also impact positively in the training of optometrists in Ghana.

Optometry in Ghana will greatly improve if Optometrists know the brass tacks of their craft, if research is conducted into the most widespread conditions affecting Ghanaians. This will all be possible if the foundation is made strong during the training process.

I want to thank you once again for your generous support, I feel that I am a step closer to achieving my goals and it has inspired me to help others by giving back to the community. I hope one day I will be able to help other students achieve their goal just as you have helped me. This award is very meaningful not only financially, but emotionally as well, as it has strengthened my belief in myself.

Sincerely,

Acheampong Oppong