

spotlite

National news from the Australian Office of St John Ambulance Australia

BEST PRACTICE | SHARED SERVICES

#8 2018



Sight is arguably the most important of our five senses—being able to see enables contact with our environment and participation in our culture and community. Being able to see means education and employment and thus resilience, opportunity and individuality. With sight there is vision!

World Sight Day 2018 is being held on 11 October to focus the world on the importance of eye health and vision care—at St John we use this opportunity to raise awareness of our Ophthalmic programs.

In Australia, we are lucky to have the resources to provide good eye health and care. We are also lucky to have antidiscrimination laws that assist people with vision impairments to have the opportunity for obtaining an education leading onto meaningful employment and a fulfilling life as members of the community. But in countries stricken by war and poverty, little or no resources such as these exist.

St John Ambulance Australia plays a major role in supporting the work of the St John Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) in Jerusalem. These activities have been supported by our Australian St John members and volunteers for over 60 years. The SJEHG is the only provider of eye care in the West Bank and Gaza. Established in 1882, the hospital provides specialist care to patients regardless of their gender, race, religion or ability to pay.

But accessing that medical care is extremely difficult, even if patients can afford it. In Gaza, 80% of people rely on international aid to survive. The rate of blindness here is ten times higher than other parts of the world. Women are disproportionately more affected by visual loss and blindness than men. In Gaza visual disabilities are the third leading cause of disability yet 80% of these can be prevented or treated.



MAKING FIRST AID A PART OF EVERYBODY'S LIFE.

St John Ambulance Australia Inc. PO Box 292, Deakin West ACT 2600 www.stjohn.org.au



With funds from St John Ambulance Australia, the SJEHG provides outreach services to about 9000 people annually. These patients are referred to the St John Eye centres in Hebron, Gaza, Anabta or the main hospital in Jerusalem. The footprint of the program includes the West Bank and Gaza.

In October last year, the St John Ophthalmic Association (SOA) Asia-Pacific branch was launched at the Perth Eye Hospital. The only other existing branch is the SOA(UK) but by the end of this year SOA(USA) and SOA(South Africa) will be launched, and the priorities in Singapore and Hong Kong will be have their SOA next year. A global meeting of the SOA was planned in Jerusalem this year but had to be postponed because of political disturbances. Membership of this global Association is open to all interested ophthalmologist and eye health professionals with an interest in, and passion for improving sight and changing lives. The aim of the SOA is to work closely and in collaboration with the SJEGH and provide global opportunities to collaborate on clinical and laboratory research; participate in visiting teaching programs in the Middle East; partnership with other ophthalmic organisations and agencies; mentor and share expert knowledge and skills; and contribute through fund- raising.

I trust that you will also continue to support the annual eye team visit to Oecussi which has been funded by St John Ambulance Australia for the past six years. Oecussi is the most isolated district of East Timor—in fact, it is geographically within West Timor. The only way to get to Oecussi is by going through international air space! It is home to 50,000 people and the only specialist ophthalmic service provided to them is twice a year—by St John Ambulance Australia. The last visit was in August 2018. Another one is planned for this month which will focus on retinal and oculoplastic surgery and ocular oncology.

In general, about 400 patients are seen and surgery carried out for 70 to 80 patients, and eye glasses provided to many of them. The team works with Timorese ophthalmologist and trainees. The overall plan is to make the Timorese health system self-sufficient in the provision of eye-care so that they are not dependent on teams from overseas. It is hoped that this status is achieved by the year 2020 (an auspicious year for eye programs).

I urge you to focus your attention on eyes and vision over the next few weeks and give due consideration to the initiatives of St John, both to prevent vision impairment and blindness in Australia, as well as internationally.

The Ophthalmic Program has established a presence on the National website. There you will find information about the various activities of the Program, and resources to use during your fundraising activities.

Ophthalmic October is also a time to brush up on your skills and knowledge of first aid of the eye and an understanding of vision disorders. There are many resources available on the St John website outlining the management of ocular emergencies. Well-equipped with this knowledge, you can make a difference when called out for such an event. In addition, you will be in a position to provide the relevant advice to people on how they can keep their eyes healthy.

Different branches in the country have had different strategies to approaching Ophthalmic Week. Some focus on education; others on fund-raising; some on both. These are important initiatives and I encourage you to carry on your good work. Without your support we could not have achieved what we have in Jerusalem and Oecussi. If there is anyway I can be of assistance, you are most welcome to contact me (enquiries@stjohn.org.au).

Best wishes

Dr Nitin Verma CSTJ AM

Hospitalier, St John Ambulance Australia
Clinical Associate Professor of Ophthalmology
University of Tasmania, University of Sydney
Faculty of Medicine, Discipline of Ophthalmology
MB BS, FRANZCO, M MED, Dip.NBE, MD

LIZ COFFEY'S PICTORIAL REPORT FROM JERUSALEM



Day 1. Let me introduce Dr Ahmad Ma'ali CSTJ PhD MPH BSN PGCE. Ahmad is the Joint Chief Executive for Clinical Activities and Patient Care. We had a lovely chat, and he's made me an ambassador for the Hospital, for Australia!



I made it! The St John Eye Hospital building and me ... in front of it ... in Jerusalem!

I don't think I brought enough scrub hats! The staff have gone a bit nuts over them.



The Hospital's staff have been so welcoming! I am staying in New Zealand House which is the dedicated nurses' quarters and for nurse volunteers. It's extremely comfortable: very modern and stylish! The Hospital can support one Australian volunteer nurse per year for a couple of weeks.



My previous background working and managing child care centres and early education has come in handy here with the children. Fortunately, I raided my nieces and nephews stock of activities before leaving—the children's ward didn't even have a crayon or toys for kids having surgery. The ward is getting renovated in November; this would be a great opportunity for St John Australia to organise a toy drive for the Hospital.

HTTPS://STJOHN.ORG.AU/ABOUT OPHTHALMIC PROGRAM

On the St John national website under About Us, open the Ophthalmic program for links to:

- The St John Eye Hospital Group
- Australian Friends of the SJEHG
- The St John Ophthalmic Association
- World Sight Day (11 October 2018)
- St John History - essays about the SJEH
- The Hospitaller

Including links to the following resources:

- *First aid for eye injuries*
- About the St John Eye Hospital Group
- Mobile Outreach with the St John Eye Hospital Group
- Ophthalmic PowerPoint - 51 images from the St John Eye Hospital Group, suitable for continuous running
- Activity package: worksheets and Facilitator guides

EVERY BIT HELPS TO SAVE SIGHT AND CHANGE LIFE

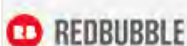
St John Ophthalmic Week Resources and Trainer Guides available for downloading on [MEMBER CONNECT](#) (search 'ophthalmic'): ● 8–12 years ● 13–15 years ● 16–17 years

ORDER A SWEET SJEHG TEE FROM REDBUBBLE

Designed by our very own Charlie Bartak—St John Inc.
Elearning Projects Officer and Graphic Designer

Sweet tees and other
hot merchandise now
available to support
the **St John of Jerusalem
Eye Hospital Group**.

100% of the profit from your
purchase goes towards this
amazing cause. Help St John
save sight and change lives.





THE ST JOHN JERUSALEM EYE HOSPITAL: A SUMMARY OF AUSTRALIA'S INVOLVEMENT

Dr Ian Howie-Willis OAM KStJ, Historical Advisor

In the 77 years Australia has had a national St John Ambulance organisation, eleven distinguished men have held the position of Hospitaller. The Hospitaller is the Priory Officer responsible for support for the St John Ophthalmic Hospital in Jerusalem, more familiarly known in recent years as the St John Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group. In order of appointment, the 11 have been:

- Brigadier Robert M Stodart (of Queensland, who held the position 1941–1942)
- Sir Donald Cameron (Queensland, 1943–1946)
- Major-General F Arthur Maguire (New South Wales, 1947–1952)
- Sir Kenneth Fraser (Queensland, 1953–1968)
- Dr Selwyn G Nelson (New South Wales, 1969–1986)
- Professor Gerard W Crook (Victoria, 1987–1996)
- Sir William Knox (Queensland, 1997–1998)
- Professor Frank A Billson (New South Wales, 1999–2005)
- Dr William ('Bill') J Glasson (Queensland, 2006–2008)
- Dr Michael J Champion (New South Wales, 2009–2015)
- Associate Professor Nitin Verma (Tasmania, 2015–present).

Australian support for the Eye Hospital has varied over time. Most commonly the support has been financial. For over 40 years, from the early 1940s until the mid-1980s, Australian fundraising for the Eye Hospital was conducted at the State/Territory level by various 'Ladies' Guilds' and 'Linen Guilds', that is women's auxiliaries which toiled to raise money through various enterprises. Eventually the notion of women's auxiliaries became passé; thereafter particular individuals tended to 'adopt' the Eye Hospital as a 'cause', often raising money from special events, for example an annual quiz night. In 2010 a more systematic approach was introduced with the establishment of a National Ophthalmic Committee headed by the Hospitaller. A further development, in 2016, was the foundation of the 'Friends of the Eye Hospital' scheme, through which supporters of the Eye Hospital Group could become registered 'Friends', pledging themselves to provide regular and continuing financial support.

An important innovation in Australian support for the Eye Hospital was introduced in 1969. This was the 'Ophthalmic Fellows' scheme, under which young Australian ophthalmologists were posted to the Hospital for a year as ophthalmological registrars. The scheme continued into the early 1990s; and while it was still in place, over 20 Australian Ophthalmic Fellows worked at the Hospital successively. The scheme had advantages for Australian ophthalmology as well as for the Hospital because the Fellows gained wide and intensive experience during their year in Jerusalem, developing skills which ultimately benefited their Australian patients. Unfortunately, the scheme ended because of the hazards of the political situation in Israel and Palestine. Instead of funding Australian ophthalmologists at the Hospital, the focus shifted to providing training at the Hospital for indigenous ophthalmologists and ophthalmological nurses. In addition, several of the Hospital's local medical professionals were brought to Australia for study and experience.

After first aid training, the Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group is the second oldest of the endeavours of the Most Venerable Order of St John. Founded in 1882, the Order's ophthalmic enterprise in Jerusalem has continued for 136 years. The work done by the Eye Hospital Group remains as vital and as critical as at any time in the Hospital's history. The mission of the Eye Hospital Group will accordingly continue to depend on the enthusiasm and generosity of the Priories of the Order, which, like the Australian Priory, have been the mainstay of its support.