Announcing The Lancet Global Health Commission on Global Eye Health

Eye health has profound and widespread implications for many aspects of life, health, sustainable development, and the economy. Yet many populations do not have access to good-quality, affordable eye care.

Worldwide there are more than 250 million people living with vision impairment, among whom 36 million are blind. In addition, over a billion people have near-vision impairment, simply because they do not have a pair of reading spectacles. Eye conditions and the vision impairment they cause affect all stages of life, with increasing burden with age. Over the next 30 years, ageing and growth of the global population will lead to a tripling of people affected, with 700 million vision impaired and 115 million of these blind. Critically, 80% of this sight loss is preventable or treatable, and 90% occurs in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs). Sight loss has substantial economic implications for affected individuals, families, and communities, with global estimates of annual costs exceeding US$ 3 trillion.

Good vision facilitates many activities of daily life and improves education and employment opportunities. Available good quality evidence shows that improved eye health offers the potential to advance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those pertaining to poverty, hunger, good health and wellbeing, education, gender equality, and decent work.

Sight loss has many causes that require a range of promotive, preventive, curative, and rehabilitative interventions. Cataract, refractive error, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, corneal opacity, and diabetic retinopathy are responsible for the majority of global vision impairment. While interventions are available for these, there is a pressing need for research to improve detection, therapeutic efficacy, and implementation. Moreover, many of these interventions remain out of reach for millions living in underserved regions in LMICs as well as disadvantaged populations in high-income countries.

In the quest to achieve universal eye health, a critical obstacle is the major shortage and maldistribution of appropriately trained personnel, particularly in Africa and rural areas within LMICs in other regions.
Comment

Health, whose report will appear in this journal on World Sight Day 2020. This Commission will:

- Analyse the current state of eye health in low-income, middle-income, and high-income countries
- Examine the implications of projected growth of global burden of eye disease and sight loss
- Provide updated estimates of the economic cost of vision impairment and the return on investment from efforts to improve eye health
- Identify knowledge gaps impeding design and delivery of better, more equitable services, through a global “Grand Challenges” exercise
- Make the political, social, and economic case for action to achieve real and lasting reductions in the global burden of avoidable vision loss
- Review established and novel, evidence-based strategies to deliver high-quality eye health services. These services should integrate well with existing health-care systems, should be mindful of environmental sustainability, and deliver services for all so that no one is left behind

The year 2020 marks the culmination of VISION 2020. This is a pivotal time for the global eye health community and its partners in health care, government, and other sectors to consider both the successes and challenges experienced through our shared efforts in recent decades. The Commission will weave together lessons learned with growing shared efforts in recent decades. The Commission successes and challenges experienced through our government, and other sectors to consider both the health community and its partners in health care, 2020. This is a pivotal time for the global eye health community and its partners in health care, government, and other sectors to consider both the successes and challenges experienced through our shared efforts in recent decades. The Commission will weave together lessons learned with growing shared efforts in recent decades. The Commission will:

- Review established and novel, evidence-based strategies to deliver high-quality eye health services. These services should integrate well with existing health-care systems, should be mindful of environmental sustainability, and deliver services for all so that no one is left behind

We acknowledge funding support for the Commission from the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, the Wellcome Trust, the Seva Foundation, Sightsavers, the Fred Hollows Foundation, and CBM. We declare no competing interests.

Copyright © 2019 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an Open Access article under the CC BY 4.0 license.


*Matthew J Burton†, Hannah B Faal†, Jacqueline Ramke, Thulasiraj Ravilla, Peter Holland, Ningli Wang, Sheila K West, Rupert R A Bourne, Nathan G Congdon, Allen Foster
International Centre for Eye Health, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK (MJB, JR, AF); Moorfields Eye Hospital, London, UK (MJB); Department of Ophthalmology, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria (HBF); School of Optometry and Vision Science, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand (JR); LAICO, Aravind Eye Care System, Madurai, India (TR); International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, London, UK (PH); Beijing Institute of Ophthalmology, Beijing Tongren Eye Center, Beijing Tongren Hospital, Capital Medical University, Beijing, China (NW); Dana Center for Preventive Ophthalmology, Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, USA (SKW); Vision and Eye Research Institute, School of Medicine, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK (RRAB); Centre for Public Health, Queen’s University, Belfast, UK (NGC); Orbis International, New York, NY, USA (NGC); Zhongshan Ophthalmic Center, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China (NCG)
mattthew.burton@lshtm.ac.uk

†Commission Co-Chairs