

Opening Ceremony of Saudi Ophthalmology Meeting at King Fahad Cultural Center

In the presence of HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Ahmad bin Abdulaziz, President of the Saudi Ophthalmological Society (SOS), the Saudi Ophthalmology 2009 was opened in KFCC on Sunday March 1, 2009 (4 Rabi Al-Awal 1430). The event was patronized by Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeiah, Minister of Health. Dr. Abdulelah Al-Towerki, KKESH General Executive Director, welcomed in his speech the participants and audience in the combined 26th Scientific Symposium of KKESH and the 22nd Scientific Symposium of SOS in collaboration with the Ophthalmology Department in the College of Medicine, King Saud University (KSU). "Since its opening in 1982, KKESH used to organize this international scientific symposium to discuss the latest developments in ophthalmology. In the last ten years, the symposium is being jointly organized with SOS and in cooperation with the Ophthalmology Department in the College of Medicine, KSU. HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Ahmad bin Abdulaziz, SOS President, has a significant role unifying the scientific efforts and merging them in one meeting for common benefit, " Dr. Towerki said.

Dr. Towerki added, "The Symposium this year will focus on recent advances in cataract, cornea, refractive surgery, biotechnology and genetics, oncology and inflammation, glaucoma, prevention of blindness and optometry". He expressed his pleasure that remarkable ophthalmologists from different parts of the world are taking part in this year's symposium as well as national speakers who will enrich this scientific meeting with updates in ophthalmology. He also said that 135 scientific papers will be discussed in addition to 18 groups of scientific lectures, 22 scientific posters and 5 presentations during the four days of the meeting. Dr. Towerki mentioned that the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties has allocated 27 continuous medical education credit hours for the attendees of the meeting. He noted that KKESH is determined to continue offering its services to education in this flourishing era under the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and His Crown Prince, as KKESH's mission is not only confined to the treatment of patients, but also extends to education, training and

research. He added that the Training Department at the Hospital provides a number of programs and the Medical Education Department remained committed to the Residency Program which began in 1984. This four-year program is fostered by the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties and is considered one of the most successful programs in the Kingdom. The certificate awarded to the graduates of the program is at an international level. The number of Saudi and GCC graduates of the program from 1984 to 2008 reached 200 ophthalmologists. The Hospital also offers the Subspecialty Fellowship Program in ophthalmology that began in 1994 and graduated 171 consultants up to 2008. In addition, KKESH offers many programs graduating qualified personnel in medical, technical and administrative specialties.

As for research, the Research Department contributed 46 publications to peer-reviewed journals in 2008. KKESH Eye Bank achieved a significant new record; supplying 1,221 corneal grafts for corneal transplantation surgeries in 2008 with an increase of 108% compared to the year 2007. He noted that in order for every doctor and specialist in the Kingdom to benefit from the expertise of the Hospital, work is underway for deploying an e-library to help specialists review lectures and surgeries performed at KKESH and have access to information in order to improve performance and patients services. Since its establishment, KKESH has operated according to the standards of the Committee on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, from which the Hospital received equivalency to full accreditation for five consecutive times, each of which for the period of three years. Also, the Hospital was awarded the Joint Commission International Accreditation (JCIA) three consecutive times, the latest being in 2008. The Health Promoting Hospitals Center in Copenhagen granted KKESH the membership certificate of the International Network of Health Promoting Hospitals in 2008 for a period of three years. He highlighted that KKESH is the first hospital in the Middle East and North Africa to be granted this certificate. He added that all these achievements were made due to the support given by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and His Crown Prince as well as the Minister of Health. At the end of his speech, Dr. Towerki thanked HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Ahmad bin Abdulaziz for his remarkable efforts to improve ophthalmology in the Kingdom. He also thanked Dr. Obaid bin Sulaiman Al-Obaid, the

Deputy Minister of Health for Planning and Development for attending the Symposium's opening ceremony on behalf of HE Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeiah, Minister of Health. Then he expressed his gratitude to the members of the SOS, Ophthalmology Department in the College of Medicine at KSU, and the Symposium's Committees. Afterwards, Dr. Al-Obaid gave a speech on behalf of the Minister of Health saying, "It gives me great pleasure to announce, on behalf of Dr. Abdullah Al- Rabeiah, the commencement of the 11th combined Annual Meeting of KKESH and SOS titled 'Saudi Ophthalmology 2009'. We undoubtedly are grateful for HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Ahmad bin Abdulaziz for his efforts in the national and international arenas for the prevention of blindness as well as his guidance in uniting the efforts of KKESH and SOS for the benefit of patient care". He also said, "KKESH was established to offer specialized patient care in compliance with the highest international standards. The services of KKESH also extend to cover education and training to graduate a generation of qualified ophthalmologists in cooperation with the College of Medicine, KSU; in addition to undertaking scientific research and national surveys of eye diseases. The achievements of KKESH have been recognized through the years and certificates have been granted from the JCIA due to the commitment of the Hospital to offering its services in accordance with their standards. In addition, the Hospital was the first in the MENA region to be granted the membership certificate of the International Network of Health Promoting Hospitals for a period of three years. All these achievements are a blessing from Allah and due to the continuous support from our Government". At the end of his speech, Dr. Obaid thanked HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Ahmad bin Abdulaziz for his significant efforts in ophthalmology in the Kingdom. He also thanked Dr. Towerki and all the workers in the field of ophthalmology. He thanked the Ophthalmology Department in the College of Medicine at KSU for their efforts in medical education especially in ophthalmology in collaboration with KKESH.

Finally, he expressed his best wishes to all the participants. After that, Prince Abdulaziz bin Ahmad bin Abdulaziz, SOS President, gave a speech saying, "It is my pleasure to welcome you all and to participate in this ceremony of Saudi Ophthalmology 2009. This meeting unifies the annual scientific symposia of KKESH and SOS in collaboration with

the Ophthalmology Department in the College of Medicine, KSU. This scientific occasion is attended by distinguished ophthalmologists from all Saudi universities and hospitals as well as from neighboring countries. It also features the active participation of prominent guest speakers from the United States, Europe, Japan, Australia and Iceland". He added that SOS is the first medical society in Saudi Arabia and was established 23 years ago. It is an umbrella society for all its member ophthalmologists and opticians. It has contributed in establishing the first fellowship program in the Kingdom to help develop this specialty. He said that SOS is proud of the scientific standing reached by the Saudi Ophthalmology Journal; it also was the first peer-reviewed journal in ophthalmology in the Region. He pointed out that SOS website has occupied a leading position as the first English/ Arabic ophthalmology website to cover scientific activities in the Kingdom and around the globe. "The Kingdom achieved a leading rank in ophthalmology and to maintain this standing, more attention should be given to specialized centers particularly for research and advanced surgical interventions that are not available in other centers. I believe it is very important to direct all efforts to develop and enhance the quality of medical services offered by specialized centers to increase the numbers of beneficiaries especially in this stage where the county is focusing on scientific research and advances. Two years ago, the National Plan for the Prevention of Blindness recommended the establishment of two specialized eye hospitals in the Northern and Southern Regions of the Kingdom. The projects were also approved by the Ministry of Health. The increase in specialized hospitals will serve several scientific, research and therapeutic aspects. I also hope to see more collaboration between Saudi ophthalmologists and international organizations working in the field to serve the advancement of ophthalmology in the Kingdom. The Kingdom has proven its leadership in the fight against visual impairment; for this reason, the Kingdom was honored at the general assembly of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness held in Argentina in 2008. In conclusion, it gives me great pleasure to announce the establishment of the GCC Ophthalmological Society hosted in Riyadh", Prince Abdulaziz said. He then expressed his gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and His Crown Prince for the services they offer to citizens and expatriates. He also thanked Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al- Rabeiah,

Minister of Health, and members of the committees for the success of this occasion. Meanwhile, Dr. Emad Aboud, KKESH Interim Executive Medical Director, introduced the international guest speakers as follows:

- Dimitri T. Azar, MD, Professor and Head of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences Department , Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary, University of Illinois, College of Medicine, Chicago, Illinois, USA.
- Michael Belin, MD, FACS, FRANZCO, Professor of Ophthalmology and Director of Cornea and Refractive Surgery, Albany Medical College, Slingerland, New York, USA.
- Nathan Efron, PhD DSc, Research Professor and Vision Domain Leader, Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation, Queensland University of Technology, Queensland, Australia.
- Bart P. Leroy, MD, PhD, Ophthalmologist, Department of Ophthalmology and Center for Medical Genetics, Ghent University Hospital, Ghent , Belgium.
- Richard Lewis, MD, Consultant Ophthalmologist, Grutzmacher and Lewis, Sacramento, California, USA.
- Andrew Sachachat, MD, Interim Institute Chair and Vice Chairman for Clinical Affairs, Cole Eye Institute, Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio, USA.
- Carol Shields, MD, Associate Director, Ocular Oncology Services, Wills Eye Institute, Philadelphia, USA.
- Jerry A. Shields, MD, Director, Ocular Oncology Services, Wills Eye Institute, Philadelphia, USA.
- Einar Stefansson, MD, PhD, Professor and Chairman of Ophthalmology, University of Iceland, National University Hospital, Reykjavík, Iceland.
- Hugh R. Taylor, AC, Harold Mitchell Chair of Indigenous Eye Health, Melbourne School of Population Health, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia.
- Elias I. Traboulsi, MD, Professor of Ophthalmology, Head of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, Director of Center for Genetic Eye Diseases, Cole Eye Institute, Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

- David T. Tse, MD, Professor of Ophthalmology, Dr. Nasser Al-Rashid Chair in Ophthalmic Plastic, Orbital Surgery and Oncology, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine, Miami, Florida, USA.
- Abhay Vasavada, MD, FRCS, Director of Iladevi Cataract & IOL Research Center, Raghudeep Eye Clinic, Gurukul, Memnagar, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India.

Afterwards, medals and certificates of appreciation were awarded as follows:

- SOS Gold Medal Lecturer: Dimitri Azar, MD.
- HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Ahmad bin Abdulaziz Prevention of Blindness Shield Recipient: Hugh R. Taylor, MD.
- SOS Shield: Ali Al-Hazemi, MD, Consultant Ophthalmologist, SOS Representative in Jazan.
- SOS Best Research Award: Amal Al-Homaidan, MD, Consultant Ophthalmologist, King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center.

An appreciation shield was awarded to Al-Amin Medical Instruments Company (AMICO) for supporting SOS activities, workshops, and exhibitions. The shield was received by Dr. Ayman Abdulhai on behalf of the company.

Afterwards, HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Ahmad bin Abdulaziz, accompanied by Dr. Obaid, cut the ribbon announcing the opening of the medical exhibition. They toured the exhibition's different sections and listened to briefing about the latest medical devices and equipment displayed at the function.

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