

Development of the Global Alliance of Eye Bank Associations

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After much discussion, eye banks around the world are uniting to launch the Global Alliance of Eye Bank Associations (Global Alliance or GAEBA).

The Global Alliance (www.gaeba.org) aims to develop and foster global interest and support on various standards, education, and data management.

Inspired by the World Health Organization's *Initiative for Medical Products of Human Origin, SDS/HIS* (special Service Delivery) unit, the Global Alliance will explore the potential for developing a global database on eye tissue materials from donor to recipient.

The Global Alliance's key organizational objectives include sharing knowledge, expertise, best practice guidelines, and information on scientific meetings, conferences, and education events; establishing a worldwide register of eye banks; developing and promoting global coding, traceability efforts, and bio-vigilance systems for ocular tissue; and providing global advocacy for eye donation and eye banking.

The Global Alliance also seeks to assist cooperating eye bank associations in promoting proper

practice and combating unethical practice associated with donation and transplantation, as advised by the WHO's *Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism*.

In 2012, a Global Alliance Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the Eye Bank Association of America, European Eye Bank Association, Association of Eye Banks of Asia, Eye Bank Association of Australia and New Zealand, Pan American Association of Eye Banks, and the Eye Bank Association of India. This memorandum demonstrates global interest and marks the beginning of formal cooperation for the betterment of the eye banking profession.

While the Global Alliance MOU connects the above foundation partners, each association will retain its independence, identity, position, and service area. The development of the Alliance is not expected to disrupt any affiliations, partnerships, prior and future arrangements, or projects of the associations. Additionally, each association will remain as the point of communication for individuals, eye bank members, and official inquiries within its region. Eye banks will continue to participate with their local eye bank association.

The Global Alliance will complement regional associations, providing a forum for partners to meet, discuss requirements, and find collaborative ways to integrate education and implement best practices. The Global Alliance has enlisted me as a Project Officer to help develop the framework for working with key stakeholders, and to launch the new initiative and website. For further information, please contact your regional eye bank association directly or myself (Project Officer) as follows: info@gaeba.org or heather.machin@unimelb.com.au. Alternatively, please visit www.gaeba.org.

