

Put one in the eye for SightSavers

Rotarian Initiative to change the lives of millions

At the end of January, the Rotary Club of Stevenage Grange launched the Rotarian Ophthalmoscope Initiative (ROI). The aim of the ROI is for Rotary Clubs, within RIBI and abroad, to donate, within the next five years, at least 25,000 of the revolutionary Optyse™ to ophthalmic medical personnel in Africa and S. Asia.

This is the start of a new era in detecting the signs of diseases ranging from glaucoma and diabetes to cerebral malaria and brain tumours.

The ROI has the potential to be a Rotary humanitarian project with results for health care comparable to Polio Plus for polio eradication. This is a marvelous example where innovation in health care will save lives.

The Optyse™ is a revolutionary new ophthalmoscope invented by Roger Armour, a retired surgeon from Hertfordshire. The Optyse™ is simple to use, robust, lens free and low cost. The Optyse™ has been in development for the last two years and is now available.

The Rotarian-provided Optyse™ has been made available to Rotary clubs at a special price of £25 each (a discount of £10) for us, in turn, to donate to international development charities specialising in eye care.

The initiative envisaged by the members of Stevenage Grange is for clubs in RIBI to make a donation to them for at least four Optyses™. The club will then



Top: The Optyse™, the subject of the initiative by the Rotary Club of Stevenage Grange. Above: Use of the equipment during field trials in Malawi.

order batches of 500 units from the manufacturer, Ophthalmos, for delivery to Sight Savers International, the primary distributor. Sight Savers, will then deliver the units to suitable health care partners in Africa and South Asia.

Rotarians have a long record in actively supporting measures to diagnose and eradicate debilitating diseases in the developing world. With the Optyse™, Rotary clubs can demonstrate their ability to bring the benefits of an amazing new invention, as rapidly as possible, to those whom can most benefit from it.

The ROI is the second phase of Stevenage Grange's promotion of the Optyse™. In 2003, Roger Armour spoke to the club and has since said, "I deeply appreciate the support of Ian Begg and the Rotary Club of Stevenage Grange for my ophthalmoscope project. I presented my

ophthalmoscope to the club in February 2003 and the interest shown boosted my confidence that my idea could be realised. The enthusiasm of the club was also helpful when raising funding for the development work required, and the Rotary Marks have been a useful reference in interesting other organisations working to help blind people."

Since then Roger has won several prizes for his invention. On the 24th of January in New York, he was a finalist in the Saachi & Saachi World Changing Ideas competition for 2005. From the eleven finalists, he went on to win the Edward de Bono "Medal for Thinking" for 2005. This device was chosen by Edward de Bono for its simplicity and application.

The Optyse™ was recognised as an RIBI Centennial Project and the invention will definitely play an important part in the Vision 2020 drive to eliminate avoidable blindness by 2020.

Laura Garcia, Chief Executive of Ophthalmos Ltd, adds "We are delighted by the support from the R/C of Stevenage Grange over the past few years and, in particular, their enthusiasm in making the Optyse™ initiative a reality. The Company's vision is to promote the use of ophthalmoscopy and "eye health" in general medical practice and to provide healthcare workers with revolutionary products to support this change. The value of our vision may be realized through healthcare savings associated

Below:
Inventor Roger
Armour pictured
with the Optyse™,
his revolutionary aid
in the fight against
avoidable blindness
in the developing
world, at the launch
of the initiative by
the Rotary Club of
Stevenage Grange.



User trials confirm the simplicity of this innovative product. Professor Bron, of the Nuffield Laboratory of Ophthalmology at the University of Oxford comments, "Unlike standard ophthalmoscopes, the lens free ophthalmoscope allows a rapid view of the fundus of the eye, with very little training".

Nick Beare, an Ophthalmologist in Blantyre, Malawi and pictured above using the invention, says, "It functions as well as a standard direct ophthalmoscope to visualise the red reflex and fundus. It provides particularly clear and focused views of the optic disc and macula."

with early detection of medical problems and the potential to improve the quality of life for individuals; especially those that may be prevented from becoming blind. This vision extends beyond the traditional healthcare setting. The launch of the ROI is exciting as it will contribute to our drive to reach people requiring support in developing countries around the world".

Please support ROI

The ROI order form and further details are available on the website at www.sgrc.org.uk. Let us bring early diagnosis and hope within the reach of millions.



Some 48 hours before this magazine went to press, your Editor was contacted by the Legal and Brands Departments of RI in Evanston and asked

to remove this feature from this issue of Rotary Magazine as there were outstanding issues concerning whether or not a licence for the use of the Rotary Mark was required and also the proposed wording to be printed on the equipment did not meet with approval.

This article has been amended to reflect those concerns and the photograph of the Optyse™ has had the original inscription removed. These actions have been taken to allow the necessary publicity schedule for this excellent project to be maintained and it is expected that, by the time you read this, all outstanding issues will have

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been resolved.

However, it does point out a salutary lesson that it is well for clubs to heed.

There is a new imperative abroad to protect and defend

the Rotary International trademarks and clubs are urged to make sure that all necessary permissions and licences have not only been applied for but obtained before publicity initiatives are launched.

There is no suggestion that the Rotary Club of Stevenage Grange have acted other than entirely properly in this matter but time to resolve potential problems should be built into any programme in order to avoid similar occurrences.

Further information and assistance can be obtained from RIBI headquarters or direct from the Marketing Department in Evanston.