



September 2024 Newsletter

This month President Santiago encourages us to think about World Sight Day, we profile the celebrations of 20 years of optometry in Uganda. send reminders for our annual meetings in Quito and Indianapolis, share information on the ALDOO congress, call for contributions to our E-book, and share information on interesting publications and events. We keep VOSH-Lebanon in our hearts.



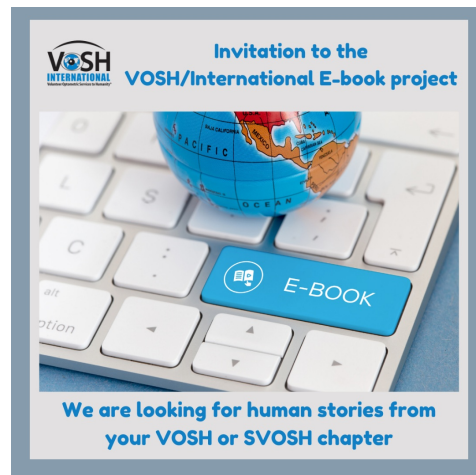
President's Insights

World Sight Day is around the corner. President Santiago reflects on the importance of this campaign for VOSH/International.

Read the whole article in English [here](#) and the Spanish version [here](#)

Do not forget to submit your entry to the VOSH E-book

Decades of humanitarian work worldwide have resulted in countless human stories that made VOSH volunteers laugh, cry, challenge stereotypes, and motivate them to continue offering eye care to those who need it most. All VOSH and SVOSH chapters are invited to contribute their stories to the VOSH E-book. The guidelines and the link for the manuscript submission are [in English here](#), and [in Spanish here](#). Chapters can submit their manuscripts until **December 15th, 2024**. Do not miss this opportunity to share your human stories with the VOSH network and its partners.



News from our chapters

Uganda celebrates 20 years of optometry

Between September 13 and 14, the



Looking back, moving forward: revolutionising optometry care in Africa



The African Council of Optometry and Optometrists Association of Uganda Congress attendees including students of the SVOSH - Makerere chapter



Optometrists Association of Uganda hosted the African Council of Optometry Congress in Kampala, Uganda, and celebrated 20 years of Ugandan optometry. The SVOSH-Makerere chapter received a mentorship grant to enable the Ugandan optometry students to attend the congress and benefit from the scientific, public health, and strategic discussions that took place there. Read an overview of the meeting [here](#).

VOSH-Northeast goes to Panama and needs ODs

This chapter is going to Panama between January 18 and 26, 2025. They will work in Churuquita Gande in the Coclé Province at the Instituto Carmen Conte Lombardo and hosted by the Dorado Rotary Club. If you are interested, please complete this form or contact: Carl Sakovits islanddoc5@aol.com or visit www.nevosh.org/news



Humanitarian clinic needs ODs for Panama

January 18 and 26, 2025



Free glasses and sunglasses

Free frames and sunglasses

VOSH-Santa Cruz-Quebec has frames and sunglasses for free. Interested chapters, please contact Father Pierre Labine at pierre.labine@sympatico.ca

In solidarity with



Two annual meetings



Abordando las inequidades de la salud visual en Latinoamérica

Reunión Anual
26 de octubre 2024
Hotel Quito
Quito, Ecuador

Únase al movimiento de voluntarios optometristas más grande del mundo

The Latin American version of our annual meeting takes place on October 26th in Quito, Ecuador. The program is [here](#).

La versión latinoamericana de nuestra reunión anual se llevará a cabo en Quito, Ecuador el sábado 26 de octubre de 2024. Tendremos una sesión practica en baja visión para los estudiantes ecuatorianos el viernes 25 y una clínica humanitaria con los colegas de la Federación de Optometristas del Ecuador el domingo 27 de octubre. Vea el programa [aquí](#).

Inscríbese aquí

Inscripción vía Zoom
aquí



Addressing eye health care inequalities through leadership and collaboration

Annual Meeting
November 9th, 2024
8:00 am-12:30 pm
Indianapolis, Indiana

Join the biggest global movement of volunteer optometrists

The US version of our Annual Meeting will be held at the Indiana University Indianapolis Campus on Saturday, November 9th between 8:00 am and 1:00 pm. New Board members will be installed, and awards and fellowships given.

The preliminary program is available [here](#).

On Friday, November 8th, the Board of Directors will meet at the same venue.

Register
here

Register for the
Indianapolis Zoom
meeting here

Supporting Latin American Optometry

VOSH/International is delighted to support the congress of the Latin American Association of Optometry and Optics (ALDOO) and the Deans of Schools of Optometry meeting taking place in Quito between October 23 and 26th.

Check our volunteers and partners who are supporting both activities [here](#). More information on the ALDOO congress is available [here](#).

VOSH members benefit from a reduced registration fee of US\$80 to the ALDOO congress. Miembros de VOSH se benefician de un registro de US\$80 para el congreso de ALDOO en Quito.



XXVI Congreso
Latinoamericano de
Optometría y Óptica

Apoyando el Congreso de ALDOO
Quito, Ecuador-Octubre 25 y 26



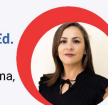
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Presidente VOSH/International
Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico

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Interesting publications

Prevalence of Refractive Error and Visual Impairment in the Guna Indians of Panama

This paper focuses on the prevalence of refractive error and vision impairment among the Guna, an indigenous group in Panama. Like other indigenous peoples, the Guna Nega community in Panama City faces significant health disparities including access to eye health. Dr Hector Santiago, president of VOSH/International is the lead author. The research initiative was a collaboration between SVOSH-IAUPR and SVOSH-UDELAS-Panama. You can contact him at: santiago@vosh.org

You can download the paper [here](#)

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www.jcmph.org
www.gatepub.com

Research Article

Prevalence of Refractive Error and Visual Impairment in the Guna Indians of Panama

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Abstract
Background: The Guna Indians, an indigenous group in Panama, face significant health disparities. The prevalence of refractive error and vision impairment has not been studied in this population and compared to other indigenous groups. Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of refractive error and vision impairment among the Guna Indians in Panama City. Methods and materials: A quantitative descriptive study was performed involving 158 Guna Indians (Panama Nega) living in Panama City. Vision was assessed using standard visual acuity charts. Refractive error was assessed using a retinoscope and an autorefractor. Visual impairment was defined as uncorrected visual acuity of 20/40 or worse. Results: The prevalence of refractive error was 100%. Myopia (37.3%), hyperopia (32.9%), and astigmatism (29.8%) were the most common refractive errors. The prevalence of vision impairment was 14.5%. Conclusion: The prevalence of refractive error and vision impairment among the Guna Indians in Panama City is high. This study highlights the need for eye health services for this population.

Keywords: Myopia, Hyperopia, Astigmatism, Vision impairment, indigenous health disparities, including limited access to eye care services, which can exacerbate the prevalence of uncorrected refractive error and vision impairment (1). Despite their location in a rural health area, limited access to eye care services, which can exacerbate the prevalence of uncorrected refractive error and vision impairment among indigenous populations in the Americas (2). The study has reported higher rates of refractive error and vision impairment among indigenous groups than among non-indigenous populations (3,4). Uncorrected refractive error can lead to vision impairment and, in severe cases, blindness. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 2.2 billion people worldwide have uncorrected refractive error, and 369 million people are visually impaired (5). This study aimed to determine the prevalence of refractive error and vision impairment among the Guna Indians of Panama City. We explored the categories of visual impairment recommended by the World Health Organization (1) and global indicators (6).

Clinical Optometry | Dovepress
ORIGINAL RESEARCH
2023 Global Survey of Optometry: Defining Variations of Practice, Regulation and Human Resources Between Countries

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Purpose: To provide information on the demographics of optometrists and regulation of the optometry profession in countries who were members of the World Council of Optometry (WCO) during the period 2022-2023.

Methods: A non-random, purposive sampling and a key informant design was employed to conduct a survey-based cross-sectional study on the professional background and distribution of optometric, educational background, legislative aspects of the profession, and the scope of optometry practice in countries who were members of WCO during the period 2022-2023. Key informants were identified by WCO country members' leadership.

Results: In the 50 countries surveyed, one optometrist served 23,200 patients on average. Only 48.2% of the countries met the internationally suggested 1:10,000 optometrist-to-population ratio. The average male-to-female ratio was 0.76, indicating 10% female, with a diversity of average age in Africa, under 40 years of age, 40% was considered to be above 45 years of age. Those reported that optometry is not regulated in France, Portugal, India, Kenya and Cameroon. Thirteen countries (26%) do not require a bachelor's degree as a minimum to practice optometry. Use of diagnostic drugs is prohibited in 20% of the countries, with 25% of the countries limiting the use of therapeutic pharmaceutical agents.

Conclusion: Many countries were necessary to accept a single angle to have an adequate number of optometrists; this helps access to eye care. This is corroborated by emphasized minimum levels of education for entry-level optometric practitioners. In addition, several countries have provided many optometric procedures that reduce the ability of optometrists to provide eye care and vision health services at the primary care level.

Keywords: eye care, scope of practice, optometrist, global distribution, legislation

Introduction
In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) released the first ever report on the state of vision impairment and blindness around the globe¹. The WHO Report on Vision (2019)². The WHO highlighted some of the most dire global health issues, including the need for a global concerted action to tackle eye health problems, but also brought to focus the immense challenges that healthcare systems face moving forward. One of the most significant outcomes of the report was data that focused on the current state of preventable vision impairment as well as the projected substantial increase in the overall number of people with visual impairment and blindness. The main causes are uncorrected refractive error and cataracts, followed by many other ocular conditions that contribute to the increasing prevalence of visual impairment. Many of the problems outlined can be managed at the primary care level by optometrists. The WHO, together with other significant publications, outlines the importance of the need for sufficiently qualified optometrists to serve the eye care needs of their populations.^{3,4} The WHO recommends a ratio of one optometrist to every 20,000 persons⁵, while a ratio of one optometrist to 10,000 persons is observed in a number of developed countries. In other developed countries, where number of optometrists far exceed the

2023 Global Survey of Optometry: Defining Variations of Practice, Regulation and Human Resources Between Countries

An interesting paper on the demographics of optometrists and the regulation of optometry in countries members of the World Council of Optometry (WCO) is available [here](#).

Dr Gammoh, faculty adviser for the SVOSH-AAU-Jordan chapter and chair of WCO's Education Committee is the corresponding author for this paper. You can contact him at: y.gammoh@ammanu.edu.jo

News from our partners

Optometry's Meeting® 2025 to host the 5th World Congress of Optometry (WCO5)

In 2025, the American Optometric Association (AOA) will host the 5th World Congress of Optometry (WCO5) in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The World Council of Optometry has opened the call for courses for this event. Submissions must be made online by October 22nd. Selected courses will be held on June 26 and 27, 2025. More information is available [here](#). Consider submitting a course. VOSH/International is an affiliate member of WCO.

OPTOMETRY'S MEETING®
5th WORLD CONGRESS OF OPTOMETRY
MINNEAPOLIS, MN | JUNE 25-28, 2025

AMERICAN OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION | INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS | WORLD COUNCIL OF OPTOMETRY

More information is available here:
<https://www.optometrismeeing.org/education/wco-call-for-courses>

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