

PRESS RELEASE

WORKSHOP ON PREVENTION OF CORNEAL BLINDNESS

By

SANKARA NETHRALAYA - NATIONAL PROGRAMME ON CONTROL OF BLINDNESS

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, observes the National Eye Donation Fortnight (August 25 to September 8) each year. The September 8th is declared as National Eye Donation Day. The main aim of the National Eye Donation Fortnight is to create awareness about eye donation amongst the public. The Eye Banks, Eye Hospitals and other NGO's are encouraged to motivate the public in large scale.

Former Prime Minister Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi introduced the concept of National Eye Donation Fortnight twenty years ago. The 20th National Eye Donation Fortnight is celebrated by all the eye banks in the country from August 25th 2005 to September 8th 2005. The Directorate General of Health Service, New Delhi provides guideline to all the eye banks in the country to organize eye donation awareness campaigns in various places. This year the Directorate General of Health Service, New Delhi, has selected Sankara Nethralaya as a co-host to organize a one day Workshop On Prevention Of Corneal Blindness and Corneal Transplantation, to be held on **September 6, 2005 at Sankara Nethralaya Main Campus, 18, College Road, Chennai at 9.30 am.**

Dr K Ananda Kannan, Ex-Vice chancellor, Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University, will be the Chief Guest and inaugurate the workshop.

Dr Brij Bhushan, Dy. Asst. Director General (Ophth.) will preside over the workshop and delegates from ORBIS, Eye Bank Association of India, District Program Officers of NPCB from various districts of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry will attend the workshop.

Dr T S Surendran, Vice-Chairman of Sankara Nethralaya honour the chief guest.

Dr K Ravishankar, Chief Executive Officer of Sankara Nethralaya, will welcome the guests and other delegates while Dr G Sitalakshmi, Director - Cornea Service will make a presentation on eye banking and eye donation. Shri. A.P.Irungovel, Special Executive, Eye Bank will explain in detail the growth and development of eye donation movement in Sankara Nethralaya. Dr.Prema Padmanabhan, Medical Director will deliver a presentation on future of eye banking in India and conclusive remarks of the workshop.

Dr Rama Rajagopal, Consultant - Cornea Service will deliver to Vote of Thanks. Dr Geeta Krishna Iyer , Consultant - Cornea Service will compere the workshop and Dr S Meenakshi – Consultant – Pediatric Ophthalmology will render the Invocation song.

Corneal Blindness, Corneal transplantation & Role of Eye Banks

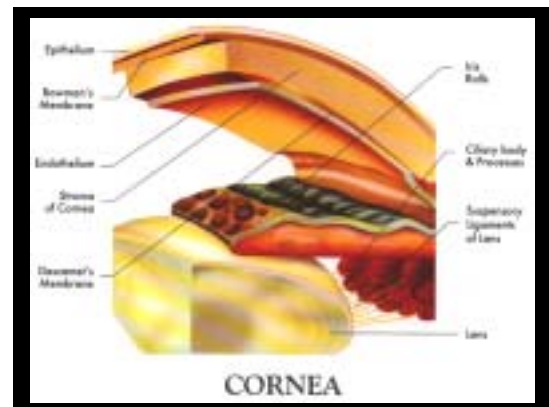
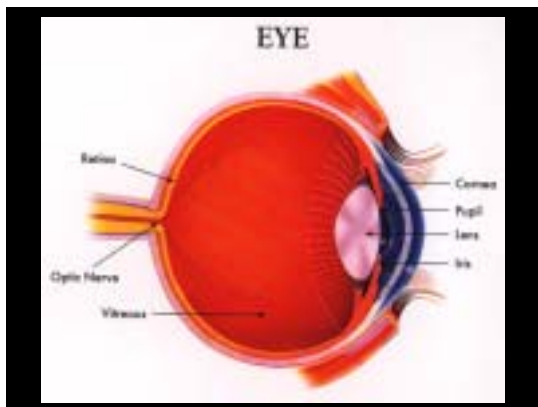
What is an eye bank?

An eye bank obtains, evaluates and distributes eyes from humanitarian-minded citizens for further use in corneal transplantation, research and for educational purposes. To ensure patient safety, the donated eyes are evaluated under strict medical standards. All donated eyes not suitable for corneal transplantation are used for valuable research and developmental studies.

Why should eyes be donated?

Donated human eyes are necessary for preservation and restoration of sight through corneal transplantation and for research and education purposes. More than 90% corneal transplant operation successfully restores vision in people suffering from blindness due to corneal problems. Infants born with cloudy corneas have an opportunity to see following a corneal transplantation.

What is the cornea?

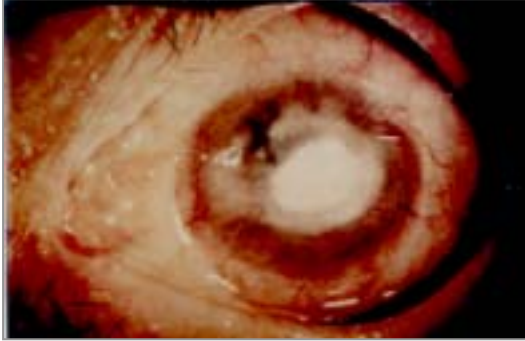


The cornea is the clear, transparent dome in front of the "black portion" of the eye. It is also the main focusing surface, which converges light rays as they enter the eye to focus on the retina. It is thus the most important part of the optical apparatus of the Eye. Loss of transparency directly results in loss of vision.

What is Corneal Transplantation?

A Corneal transplant is a surgical procedure, which replaces the opaque cornea with a clear cornea obtained from a human donor eye.

Before PK



After PK



How does a Cornea become opaque?

1. Infection
2. Injuries
3. Iatrogenic (Malpractice, Improper Post-operative care after any eye surgery)
4. Malnutrition
5. Congenital / Hereditary.

Magnitude of the problem in India

1/4th of the world's blind are in India
27 million - moderate sight impairment
9 million - bilateral blind
3 million - blind children

The number of Corneal Blinds in India are about 4.60 Million out of which nearly 90% are below the age of 45 years of which about 60% are below the age of 12 years. Out of this 4.6 Million, at least 3 Million can benefit by corneal transplantation.

Who can be an eye donor?

Practically any person from the age of one year. There is no maximum age limit. Poor eyesight and age make no difference. One can bequeath his eyes by taking a pledge while he is alive. He resolves to donate his eyes after his death. This by itself is a noble act but it requires relatives or friends to carry out his pledge, his desire, especially after his / her death.

Spectacle users, persons who had cataract surgery, diabetics and hypertensives may also donate their eyes. The ultimate decision about usage for transplantation will be made after detailed evaluation.

Can the next-of-kin consent to a donation if the deceased family member hasn't signed a pledge form?

Yes.

How to donate?

You are authorised to donate the eyes of your beloved relatives at the time of their death. However, the eyes need to be collected within six hours of death. So, call the eye bank as quickly as possible after the death.

Things to do after making the call:

1. Keep both eyes of deceased closed and covered with moist cotton.
2. Switch off the overhead fan.
3. If possible, instill antibiotic eye drops periodically in the deceased's eyes-to reduce the chance of infection.
4. Raise the head end of the body by about 6 inches, if possible, to lessen the incidence of bleeding during the removal of the eyes.

Who cannot be a donor?

- Death of unknown cause.
- Death due to infections caused by rabies, syphilis, infectious hepatitis, septicemia, and AIDS,

Is there any delay in funeral arrangements?

No. Eye removal procedure takes only about thirty minutes and leaves no visible signs that would interfere with common funeral practices.

Is there any religious conflict?

No. Donation of eye gives a gift of life or sight to others. As such, it is consistent with beliefs and attitudes of all major religious and ethical traditions.

Can the whole eye be transplanted?

No. Only the cornea can be transplanted. However, the rest of the parts of the donor eye are used for research and education purposes.

Can a person blind from retinal or optic nerve disease donate his eyes?

Yes, provided the cornea is clear.

Can a living person donate his/her eyes?

No, the prevailing laws do not permit.

Can the recipients be told who donated the eyes?

No. The gift of sight is to be made anonymously.

Any special phone number for eye bank and eye donation?

Yes, a dedicated special toll free four-digit phone number: 1919 is available. Family members of the deceased persons can contact this phone number to donate the eyes of the deceased person.

Compiled by :

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