



Bernardino Iliakis Honored with EBAA Heise Award

Seattle (December 1, 2015)— SightLife Chief Operating Officer Bernardino “Bernie” Iliakis was recently honored by the Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA) with the Leonard Heise Award. The Heise is presented to a non-physician individual within the eye banking community recognized for outstanding devotion to the EBAA’s development and for exemplifying the precepts of Leonard Heise, a major contributor to the fight against blindness and one of the EBAA’s original founders. The award will be given to Bernie at the EBAA Annual Meeting in St. Louis, Missouri in June 2016.

“In the world of eye banking there are very few people who have had as much impact as Bernie,” said SightLife President and CEO Monty Montoya. “I know first hand that SightLife would not have been nearly as successful in its mission to eliminate corneal blindness if it had not been for Bernie’s tireless efforts to ensure the quality and quantity of donor corneas. He has continually grown and risen to challenges so that the cornea blind receive the gift of sight.”

Bernie started his career as a technician at SightLife (then known as Northwest Lions Eye Bank) in August 1995 where he did everything from recovering tissue from donors to training other technicians. By 1998, Bernie had become technical director responsible for all operations staff and eye bank policy and procedure. In 2003, he became chief operating officer and, under his leadership, the number of SightLife-enabled transplants each year has grown to nearly 25,000.

Bernie's multi-year clinical research on the development of the practical use of laser technology was unique enough to apply for a U.S. Patent in 2006. The result, a process to surgically cut corneal transplant tissue using a femtosecond laser, helped to revolutionize the delivery of care to individuals suffering from corneal blindness. Bernie’s role in developing the delivery of this tissue type also made him a leader in the eye banking community to help develop medical standards for eye banks to implement this procedure at their own facilities.

When SightLife’s mission evolved in 2009 to focus on the elimination of corneal blindness worldwide, Bernie adjusted his operational priorities to align with and support the anticipated global growth. Among his contributions is the development of international partnerships with surgeons in countries like India, Japan and Greece, extending the gift of sight to people and cultures without a sufficient pool of cornea donors from which to draw.

A passionate and encouraging eye banker, Bernie now consults with growing eye banks in many countries, providing his experience with best-in-class operations as a model for them to emulate. He also serves as a quality and accreditation trainer to the Eye Bank Association of India and the Japanese Corneal Transplant Society and has organized many sessions at the Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology meeting.

About SightLife

Founded in 1969, SightLife is the largest and most experienced provider of corneas for transplant in the world, and is the only non-profit global health organization and eye bank solely focused on eliminating corneal blindness worldwide.

SightLife and its global partners provided nearly 21,000 corneas for transplant in 25 countries in 2014. Ocular Systems, Inc. (OSI), which developed and manufactures the EndoSerter and EndoSaver surgical devices, became part of SightLife in 2014. For more information, visit www.sightlife.org.

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