

Future Leaders in Eye Health lauded in Kenya

The eye health fraternity in Africa paid homage to the winner of the coveted Future Leader in Eye Health Research Award in Naivasha Kenya on 27 August 2015.

NAIVASHA, KENYA, August 27, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The eye health fraternity in Africa paid homage to the winner of the coveted Future Leader in Eye Health Research Award at the 2015 Annual Scientific Congress in Naivasha Kenya on 27 August 2015.

Dr Léopald Niyonsavye, a young Ophthalmologist from Burundi, received the award for compiling the most



2015 Annual Scientific Congress in Naivasha Kenya

outstanding resident abstract for the congress. The abstract titled “Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices on Diabetic Retinopathy among General Practitioners in District and Regional Hospitals in the North Region of Burundi” will establish the level of knowledge, attitudes and practices among General Practitioners on Diabetic Retinopathy which will be the base for the government to plan the necessary actions required to achieve the World Health Organisation’s goal of eliminating avoidable blindness due to Diabetic Retinopathy.

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Dr Lucy Njambi, Chair of the Research Committee

Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is the fourth leading cause of blindness in Burundi and since general practitioners are the primary care givers for patients with Diabetes Mellitus (or diabetes) they are key to screening for DR.

“The results of this study are expected to create awareness among the general practitioners to the existence of DR as a

serious disease leading to blindness, which is preventable through early detection and screening and treatment. For me winning the award is a dream come true. Thank you very much for granting me this wonderful opportunity. I am extremely grateful,” said Dr Niyonsavye who completed his Bachelors in Medicine at the University of Burundi and his MMED at the University of Nairobi.

“Dr Leopold’s study assessed knowledge, attitude and practice on diabetic retinopathy among general practitioners in Burundi. Diabetic retinopathy is among the emerging causes of avoidable blindness in the developing world. The study demonstrated the lack of knowledge on risk factors for diabetic retinopathy as well the importance of accurate fundus examination. It did also demonstrate the positive attitudes of participants. General practitioners need good knowledge and practice on diabetic retinopathy for early detection, referral and treatment to avoid blindness,” explains Dr Lucy Njambi, Chair of the Research Committee.

Dr Niyonsavye received the award which is co-sponsored by Orbis, a global non-profit organisation working in developing countries to reduce preventable and treatable blindness and visual impairment, in collaboration with The College of Ophthalmology of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (COECSA). The award was established in 2014 as part of COECSA's and Orbis's commitment to develop future eye health leaders through mentorship and career planning. Orbis' sponsorship is based on the organisations drive to strengthen Human Resources for Eye Health (HReH) in Africa.

"The growth of any field in medicine relies heavily on research and more so in ophthalmology due to its highly dynamic nature. The gap in clinical research in the developing world remains wide as it receives less attention. Encouraging research and rewarding young ophthalmologists emphasises the core role of research in improving clinical care. It also motivates them to engage in research early into their career," says Dr Njambi.

"One of the biggest barriers to the goal of providing eye health for all in Africa is the critical shortage of eye health workers. Orbis in partnership with the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) Africa and in collaboration with COECSA is committed to strengthening HReH throughout Eastern and Southern Africa through our exciting Human Resources Strengthening Initiative for Eye Health in Africa," explains Ms. Halli Manolakos-Tsehis, Head of Programme Development at Orbis Africa.

In addition to recognition amongst his peers and mentors as winner of the Future Leader in Eye Health Research Award, Dr Niyonsavye will receive support from Orbis who will fund mentorship and leadership development. He also received financial support to cover conference registration fees, air travel costs and 2 nights' accommodation at the 2015 Annual Scientific congress held at the Enaishipai Resort and Spa in Naivasha Kenya.

Editors notes:

Orbis is a global non-profit organisation working in developing countries to reduce preventable and treatable blindness and visual impairment. Orbis facilitates quality eye care by providing the tools, training and technology necessary for local partners to develop lasting solutions to avoidable blindness. Orbis always works in partnership with stakeholders from government to civil society and aligns its work with national policy. Orbis Africa manages two large initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa: Child Eye Health and Strengthening Human Resources for Eye Health. For more information on Orbis Africa visit www.orbis.org

The College of Ophthalmology of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (COECSA) is a registered specialised virtual college and aims to address the chronic shortage of ophthalmologists in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa as well as improve the quality of eye care services in the region. For more information on COECSA visit www.coecsa.org

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