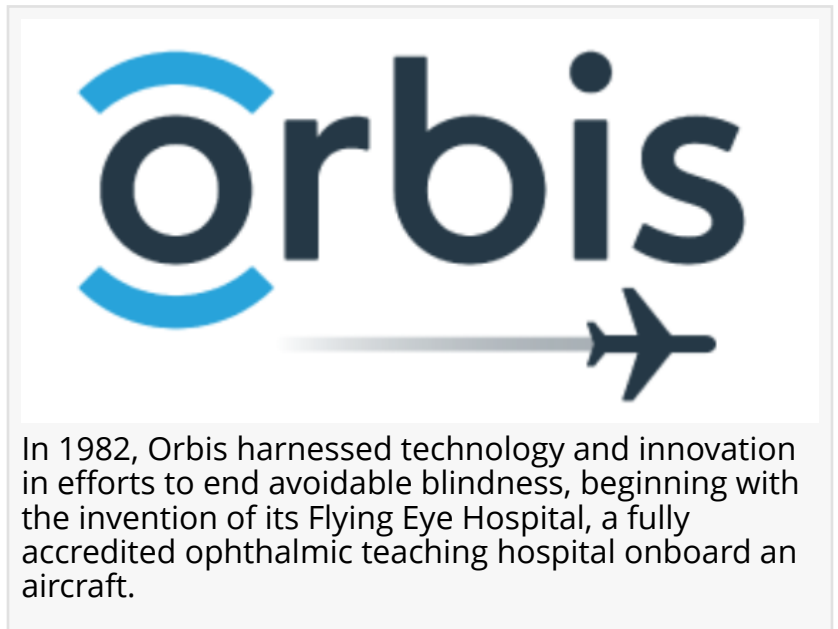


New Funding for Orbis International will Increase Global Access to Eye Care through Technology

Philanthropists Susan and John A. Sobrato donate \$1 million to launch Silicon Valley Orbis Innovation Fund

MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA, UNITED STATES, December 3, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This Giving Tuesday, Orbis International announced the launch of its Silicon Valley Orbis Innovation Fund, which seeks to raise \$8 million in donations to harness the next generation of technology that will revolutionize the future of equitable access to quality eye care and ophthalmological training. The Fund kicked off today with a \$1 million donation from Silicon Valley philanthropists Susan and John A. Sobrato, held at Mountain View's Computer History Museum.



In 1982, Orbis harnessed technology and innovation in efforts to end avoidable blindness, beginning with the invention of its Flying Eye Hospital, a fully accredited ophthalmic teaching hospital onboard an aircraft.

The new technologies will include innovations in telemedicine, artificial intelligence, simulation and virtual reality (VR) that will increase access to training for eye care teams in low- and middle-income settings.

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Bob Ranck, President & CEO of Orbis International

“Hundreds of millions of people go through life facing blindness and visual impairment simply because they can't get the eye care they need. We have an opportunity to change that,” said Bob Ranck, President & CEO of Orbis International. “Training entire eye care teams – everyone from health workers in rural clinics to eye surgeons in urban centers – is the best, most sustainable way to ensure no one needlessly lives a life without sight.”

Experts predicted that global blindness and visual impairment will triple by 2050, but the number of people

needing eye care is outpacing the number of trained ophthalmologists. This makes it an especially critical moment to reimagine how we train eye care teams and prepare them to provide quality care in their communities.

“We live in a remarkable time of innovation, but too often, technologies never reach the people who could most benefit from them,” said John A. Sobrato. “I'm proud to invest in Orbis because it's an organization that understands the power of making cutting-edge technology accessible to

communities for whom it normally remains out of reach. Orbis's vision for the future will shape the future of vision as we know it."

In 1982, Orbis harnessed technology and innovation in efforts to end avoidable blindness, beginning with the invention of its Flying Eye Hospital, a fully accredited ophthalmic teaching hospital onboard an aircraft. Today, Orbis's innovative approaches are also carried out via long-term programming in 18 countries worldwide and through the organization's award-winning telemedicine platform, Cybersight.

The Silicon Valley Orbis Innovation Fund will expand the reach of Orbis's achievements in technology and innovation in the following ways:

Telemedicine: For over 15 years, Cybersight has used the latest advancements in technologies to give eye care teams virtual access to clinical training, live lectures, demonstrations, and on-demand advice for complex patient cases. Through Cybersight, Orbis trained nearly 6,000 eye health professionals in 165 countries, including remote and conflict-affected areas, in 2018 alone.

An important goal of the Fund is to develop a Cybersight mobile app. This will provide even more doctors and clinicians – including in remote and conflict-affected areas – with access to training and virtual mentoring. The Fund will also cover the development of new Cybersight courses as well as enhancements to the platform.

Artificial Intelligence: A new artificial intelligence tool on Cybersight can detect common eye diseases, such as diabetic retinopathy, in seconds by examining digital photographs of the back of the eye. This is a game-changing technology for increasing access to early detection, which is critical to prevent treatable eye conditions from leading to vision loss. Refinements needed to further increase the accuracy of the technology and the number of conditions it can detect will be made possible through the Fund.

Simulation: Orbis's simulation training program uses VR, prosthetics, and sophisticated, life-like mannequins so teams can safely build skills and confidence before progressing to real-life surgeries. Simulation training is proven to effectively decrease complication rates, reduce surgical time and improve outcomes among a surgeon's early surgical cases. This results in a better patient experience, cost savings and improved standards of care.

Orbis introduced its simulation training onboard the Flying Eye Hospital in 2018 with funding from Collins Aerospace, and has rolled out the technology in two institutions in South America, where trainees can use audiovisual equipment to record their surgical assignments, then submit them to board-certified specialists for assessment based on international standards. The Fund will allow for 18 more of these centers, six per year over a three year period, to be opened in areas across the globe.

Virtual Reality: Orbis, in collaboration with FundamentalVR, is developing a training platform for ophthalmology students to practice procedures without a professor present, on what feels like actual human tissue. It is the world's first-ever technology of its kind to use low-cost, off-the-shelf hardware, available at a fraction of the cost of existing surgical simulators. The platform will benefit doctors in places where previous simulators were too big or expensive to be deployed, enhancing the quality of ophthalmology practice globally.

The first procedure available will be the surgical technique that is most commonly used in developing countries for treating cataracts, the world's leading cause of blindness. Future developments will enable students to use the same hardware to complete VR training that improves their treatment of glaucoma, strabismus and other eye conditions.

Drs. David and Victoria Chang and the ASCRS Foundation have donated funding toward the

development of VR surgical training tools. Gil Kliman, Managing Director of InterWest Partners and an Orbis Board Member, has also donated toward general support of the Fund.

Orbis is well-known for its responsible use of donor funds, with more than 92¢ of every dollar going directly toward the organization's work to prevent avoidable blindness. Orbis has also been named one of Consumer Reports' Best Charities and been given a four-star rating from Charity Navigator. Orbis's fiscal responsibility has helped it make Forbes's annual list of the largest U.S. charities, as measured by gifts received.

About Orbis International

Orbis works in collaboration with local partners, including hospitals, universities, government agencies and ministries of health, and provides hands-on ophthalmology training, strengthens healthcare infrastructure and advocates for the prioritization of eye health on public health agendas. Orbis operates the world's only Flying Eye Hospital, a fully accredited ophthalmic teaching hospital on board an MD-10 aircraft, and an award-winning telemedicine platform, Cybersight.

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