

# Eye Care Program launched at Quang Tri Medical College



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An idea that had its genesis seven years ago during a fact-finding trip is now coming to pass with the kick-off of a program in Quang Tri Province in Viet Nam to train rural doctors about eye care. In partnership with the Global Community Service Foundation (GCSF) based in Fairfax, VA, and with major funding from the Cole-Crone Family Foundation of Deerfield, IL, the Quang Tri Medical College (QTMC) is ready to admit its first students to the new eye care training program.

Illinois Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons (ISEPS) Director Richard Paul participated in the dedication ceremony which included opening a fully-equipped room where students can gain practical experience in performing eye examinations. Two doctors and a nurse on staff at the QTMC spent several



*Technicians test the equipment*

months at the Hue Eye Hospital to become qualified to teach eye anatomy, diseases and exam techniques. Dr. Ha Thi Thu Hoang, head of the eye clinic in the provincial capital of Dong Ha City, has been an essential part of the curriculum development, as well as providing hands-on experience at her clinic for the students who enroll in the course.

“The goal for this program is to provide essential care skills to the doctors in rural villages and outlying districts throughout Quang Tri Province,” Paul said. “It’s fair to say that early diagnosis and treatment of eye disease with prompt referral for more serious conditions will result in less preventable blindness and overall improved eye health. By bringing this expertise to the local doctors, we are supporting a sustainable program that will be beneficial for years to come.”



*Dr. Ha and ISEPS Executive Director Paul cut the ribbon at the QTMC dedication ceremony*



*Official opening of the expanded Quang Tri Medical College*

Paul noted that in 2008, he and ISEPS member James Katz, MD, traveled to the province for the first time on a fact-finding mission, a trip that included a visit to the medical school in Dong Ha. At the time, the school offered 2-year programs in pharmacy, midwifery and nursing. Since then, the facility expanded to a 3-year medical college with additional course offerings. "Little did we know that when we paid that first visit something like this would come about." Paul said.

With more than 600,000 residents in Quang Tri Province, it is estimated that 6,000 to 10,000 are blind or significantly disabled, with many more in need of eye care, including correction of refractive error. The eye clinic in Dong Ha has been on a multi-year improvement effort to better meet the needs of the population. With the phaco training and new equipment, the four ophthalmologists there are now performing about 120 cases per month. The clinic hopes to add treatment of diabetic

eye disease – a major cause of blindness in the area – as well as better care for glaucoma patients.

Local dignitaries, ISEPS director Rich Paul, Dr. Ha, college faculty and honored guests gathered to dedicate the initiation of the eye care training program at the Quang Tri Medical College on October 21, 2015 in Dong Ha City.



*ISEPS Executive Director Paul tests the equipment*