



PROGRESS REPORT

October 2024

Victoria Cohen
EYE CANCER CHARITABLE TRUST

Saving lives, eyes and vision
through education

Introduction

The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust is entered on the register of charities in England and Wales, registered charity number 1194105.

Details regarding the charity are available at the Charity Commission website <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5179342/charity-overview> or at www.vcecct.org

The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust was set up in memory of Vicky Cohen (1970-2020), Director of the Ocular Oncology Department at Moorfields Eye Hospital, London, UK, and President of the International Society of Ocular Oncologists (ISOO).

The main aims of the charity are to raise awareness of both eye cancer and the global need for more doctors, and to support aspiring ocular oncologists with the cost of their fellowship.

Training to become an eye specialist takes many years but not everyone who has the ambition or ability has the means to support themselves through their education.

Each year, the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust awards a scholarship to an aspiring ocular oncologist, chosen by our expert panel, to support them through their fellowship.

There are not enough ocular oncologists in the world. The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust identifies and supports the Vicky Cohens of tomorrow, individuals who will go on to save the lives, eyes, and vision of countless people affected by eye cancer.

Progress update from Dr. Vijitha Vempuluru

Winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship 2022



Since completing my fellowship at the Wills Eye Hospital, Philadelphia, USA, and embarking on my role as a Consultant Ophthalmologist and Ocular Oncologist at the LV Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad, India, my practice has grown significantly as I apply the knowledge acquired during my training. I have had the privilege of diagnosing and treating an increasing number of patients with complex ocular malignancies, including retinoblastoma, ocular surface squamous neoplasia, sebaceous gland carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, uveal melanoma, and several orbital tumors. My training at the LV Prasad Eye Institute, coupled with my experience at the Wills Eye Hospital, has guided my approach to these challenging cases, enabling me to offer cutting-edge treatment options tailored to each patient's needs.

One of the most fulfilling aspects of my work is being a part of our multidisciplinary team focused on ocular oncology care. Collaborating with pathology,

radiation oncology, and medical oncology experts, we implement comprehensive treatment plans integrating the latest research and clinical protocols. This collaborative environment has enhanced patient outcomes and provided me with continuous learning opportunities as we strive to improve the standards of care in ocular oncology in India.

In addition to my clinical responsibilities, I have remained deeply engaged in research initiatives focused on improving the diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes of eye cancers. Under the aegis of Dr Swathi Kaliki, who heads the Operational Eyesight Universal Institute, our team has brought out several exciting research papers on retinoblastoma and sebaceous carcinoma. This research is expected to contribute valuable insights to the global ocular oncology community, furthering our understanding of these complex diseases.

Celebrating 'Retinoblastoma Awareness Week' in May 2024, I was glad to help with the execution of Whitathon, a fund-raiser run for retinoblastoma. I participated in the 10 km run to raise awareness about eye cancer. In July 2024, LVPEI hosted Cutting Edge, a flagship event covering several aspects of oculoplastics and the basics of ocular oncology. At the program, I spoke on "When to suspect retinoblastoma?" which was directed at promoting awareness about the early detection of retinoblastoma in a comprehensive ophthalmology practice. I am also excited to be part of the Organizing Committee of the International Society of Ocular Oncology (ISOO) 2024 Conference, which will be held in December 2024 in Goa, India.

Reflecting on the past six months, I am deeply grateful for the support of the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust (www.vcecct.org), which has continued to inspire and motivate me in my journey. The fellowship experience has left a lasting impact on my career, and I am committed to honoring that support by pushing the boundaries of what is possible in ocular oncology. As I look to the future, I am eager to continue contributing to the field, focusing on advancing research, improving patient care, and expanding access to life-saving treatments. The challenges ahead are significant, but with the knowledge, skills, and passion I have developed, I am confident that we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those affected by eye cancers.

Update from Dr. Chika Amobi

Winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship 2023



My dream to become an ocular oncologist became reality when I was selected as the winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship. This prestigious award initially set me on a path to train in Israel under the mentorship of Dr. Victoria Dai. However, just a few weeks before my scheduled departure, conflict erupted in the region and, at the time of writing, is ongoing. As a result, my training center was changed to the United States, where I am currently undergoing my fellowship at Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia under the mentorship of the renowned Dr. Carol Shields.

Since being here, I have had the opportunity to observe and participate in the management of over 1,000 cases of various ocular tumors at different stages. This extensive exposure has significantly deepened my understanding of ocular oncology and allowed me to witness first-hand the diverse approaches

to managing complex cases. The experience has been invaluable, not only in enhancing my clinical knowledge but also in fostering creativity in my approach to patient care.

In addition to the clinical exposure, I have also made two presentations at the monthly 'Holy Moly Shields Ocular Oncology Rounds' – an online presentation attended by people from all over the world. The insights I am gaining here are equipping me to make meaningful contributions to the field and to improve patient outcomes in my home country, Nigeria, and beyond. I am deeply grateful for the support provided by the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust, which has reduced the cost of my training on this transformative journey.

Thank you once again for your unwavering support and for believing in my potential.



Dr. Sayed Mansoor Sediqi

Winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship 2024

In March we were delighted to announce that Dr. Sayed Mansoor Sediqi from Kabul, Afghanistan, was the winner of this year's Victoria Cohen Scholarship. As ever, the Judging Panel had a very difficult decision to make, but felt that Dr.Sediqi's experience, passion, and circumstances made him the ideal choice to be the third aspiring ocular oncologist to win this prestigious award. Currently, there is no ocular oncology service in Afghanistan and the charity was hopeful that our support for Dr.Sediqi could one day make a significant difference to countless people affected by eye cancer in the country.

Dr.Sediqi was due to take up his fellowship at the Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia, USA, under the

mentorship of Dr.Carol Shields. Unfortunately, however, Dr.Sediqi has so far been unable to obtain a visa for the USA and his fellowship is on hold. Dr.Sediqi is applying to other Centres of Excellence for a fellowship opportunity but, at the time of writing, is unable to continue with his training. This is very upsetting for him and deeply frustrating for the charity. Afghanistan urgently needs ocular oncology expertise and yet politics and bureaucracy would appear to be preventing progress on this front.

The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust remains committed to supporting Dr. Sediqi as and when he is able to pursue his fellowship.



Travel awards

The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust supports aspiring ocular oncologists. Attending and networking at relevant conferences is an important part of any ocular oncologists education, as such the charity is pleased to offer Victoria Cohen Travel Grants for those in need of support with the cost of travel and attendance.

We are pleased to share that the selected recipients for the **ISOO Congress in Goa, December 3-7, 2024**, are Dr. Almila Sarigul Sezenoz (Turkey) and Dr. Nikita Garg (Australia). Both recipients demonstrated exceptional work and we are proud to support their participation at the Congress with a grant of \$2,000 each.

The charity is also providing Dr.Chika Amobi with additional funding so she can attend this important conference.



Judging Panel

The decision regarding who wins the Victoria Cohen Scholarship rests entirely with the Judging Panel, which is made up of six leading ocular oncologists from around the world.

Details of the Judges and their bios can be found here: <https://www.vcecct.org/about-us/>

Each year the Judges look for the aspiring ocular oncologist with a combination of the greatest potential and the greatest need. Applicants must demonstrate both talent and passion for ocular oncology, and the need for financial support through their fellowship. All applications are anonymised to ensure the integrity of the judging process.

Ambassadors

Eye cancer is a global disease, and our mission is to raise awareness of the charity and the need for more ocular oncologists around the world. To do this we are building a team of Ambassadors who are each responsible for their own region. Each of these Ambassadors is a survivor, they have all been affected by eye cancer, and are keen to give something back.

- Africa - *vacant*
- Asia - *vacant*
- Australasia - Georgia Hall
- Europe - Howard Lloyd
- Middle East - Mohammad al Omari
- North America - *vacant*
- South America - *vacant*
- UK - John Bird, Abby Vidler

Details of our Ambassadors are available at www.vcecct.org/meet-our-ambassadors/

Trustees

The charity is grateful for the support of an experienced team of Trustees:

- Tim Weller - Media Entrepreneur
- Jamie Campbell-Harris - Chief Financial Officer
- Matthew Searle - Lawyer
- Nicholas Rapley - Chairman

Details on the Trustees can be found at the Charity Commission website and on LinkedIn.

Fundraising

Since the charity was established, fundraising has come from a variety of foundations, businesses, and individuals. We are grateful to all those who raise funds for the charity through their own efforts, whatever they may be.

There are numerous ways to support the charity, details can be found at www.vcecct.org/support-us

Get in the
Christmas spirit
at the
*Dickensian
Christmas
Carol Concert*

The charity's next fundraising event is 'A Dickensian Christmas Carol Service' at the **Priory Church of St Bartholomew the Great, London, UK, on 2nd December 2024.**

This is a magical event which gets everyone in a festive mood whilst raising awareness of eye cancer and the need for more ocular oncologists.

Tickets are available here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-dickensian-christmas-carol-service-tickets-911447392687?aff=oddtcreator>

*Please
join us!*



Marketing and Communications



2112 Communications (www.2112comms.com)

We are very fortunate to have the support of 2112 Communications, a leading marketing and design agency, which has developed the brand image of the charity, especially online and on social media, and helps with all external communications. The charity is especially grateful to Siobhan Brunton and her team.



A Cure in Sight (www.acureinsight.org)

A Cure in Sight is a US-based charity which supports families who have ocular melanoma and focuses on research for a cure. ACIS regularly shares content with us and actively helps with our social media strategy. We are especially grateful to Melody Burchett and Danet Peterson for their help.



The Power of Words (www.thepowerofwords.co.uk)

TPW provides connected communications to corporate clients. Tessa Parry-Wingfield, Founder, is an experienced former journalist and marketing professional. Tessa creates content for the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust through interviews with those affected by eye cancer, or those connected with our charity in some way. We use this content on social media to raise awareness of eye cancer and the need for more ocular oncologists.

Supporters

As the charity evolves, our network of Supporters grows. The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust now enjoys beneficial reciprocal relationship with the following organisations:



Looking ahead

The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust is three years old and has made three awards so far. The recipients of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship have either completed their fellowship, are currently on their fellowship, or are about to begin their fellowship. All of them will become experienced ocular oncologists who will go on to save the lives, eyes, and vision of those affected by eye cancer.

The Trustees and the Judges have agreed that the charity will continue to offer one Victoria Cohen Scholarship per annum. This keeps the award exclusive, meaningful, and much sought-after by aspiring ocular oncologists. The value of the Scholarship is increasing to \$40,000 USD from 2025. The value of the scholarship is potentially life-changing, making a fellowship at a Centre of Excellence a possibility when otherwise unaffordable.

We are still young as an organisation. Our short-term goals are to raise awareness of eye cancer, the need for more ocular oncologists around the world, the work of the charity, and the existence of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship for aspiring ocular oncologists. This is our focus.

There are, however, plenty of associated opportunities to consider. The charity sponsors prizes for the Best Oral Presentation and Runner-Up at industry events organised by the International Society of Ocular

Oncologists (ISOO) and the Ocular Oncology Group (OOG). The charity benefits from goodwill and awareness by supporting such opportunities.

We also provide Victoria Cohen Travel Awards to ISOO, OOG, and Ocular Oncology Day (OOD). There are many aspiring ocular oncologists who would attend important conferences from these organisations, but the cost of travel is often a barrier, especially in low-income countries. Our support helps young ocular oncologists to build important connections.

We also feel there is more we can do to support those affected by eye cancer by creating a sense of community through the charity. This is the approach taken by eye cancer charities in other countries, such as A Cure in Sight in the USA, who we have developed a close working relationship with.

In the short term, we believe the best way we can help those affected by eye cancer is to continue supporting aspiring ocular oncologists with the cost of their fellowship. These are the Vicky Cohens of tomorrow, individuals who will save the lives, eyes, and vision of countless people affected by eye cancer.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our donors.

Thank you for your kindness.

<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/17531#!/DonationDetails>

Victoria Cohen Scholarship

President of ISOO 2018 - 2020

