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Orbis and Alcon to Kick Off Two-Week Training for Caribbean Eye Care Teams to Help Fight Avoidable Blindness in Local Communities

- The project marks the Orbis Flying Eye Hospital's first return to in-person programming since the start of the pandemic

FORT WORTH, August 4, 2022 – On Monday, August 8, Orbis International, with generous support from Alcon, the global leader in eye care, will kick off its first in-person training project on board the Flying Eye Hospital – a fully accredited ophthalmic teaching hospital on board a plane – since the pandemic began. Over a two-week period, Orbis's clinical staff and Volunteer Faculty (medical experts) along with Alcon bioengineers and trainers will share their knowledge with nearly 50 ophthalmologists, ophthalmology residents, nurses and biomedical engineers from several countries throughout the Caribbean,* helping them build skills to fight avoidable blindness in their communities.

The participants will hone their skills using cutting-edge ophthalmic surgical simulation training technology on the Flying Eye Hospital, which is currently at Fort Worth Alliance Airport, and additional hands-on training in the Alcon Experience Center (AEC), a state-of-the-art training facility on Alcon's nearby campus. Simulation training allows the visiting eye care teams to grow their confidence in a training environment before moving on to real-life surgical procedures.

Learning surgical skills for cataract removal will be a major focus of the training. Cataracts remain the leading cause of blindness worldwide† despite being treatable with an operation that can take as little as ten to fifteen minutes. Participants will also learn to treat other conditions that threaten vision, including glaucoma, the most common cause of irreversible blindness. A select group of these participants, who are already highly experienced ophthalmologists, will also participate in a train-the-trainer course, which will deepen their ability to train the next generation of eye care professionals. This helps ensure ongoing continuity of and local access to eye care in their home countries.

“When the pandemic broke out in March 2020, we had to make the difficult decision to cancel the second half of a training we were delivering in Fort Worth in partnership with Alcon, so we could not think of a more fitting place for the Flying Eye Hospital to return to in-person programming,” said Derek Hodkey, President and CEO of Orbis International. “While the plane has continued its mission

* Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago

† <https://www.iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas/causes-of-vision-loss>

virtually over the past two years, this is an unmistakable sign of hope, a chance to pick up where we left off and an opportunity to apply new innovations to our fight against avoidable blindness.”

Alcon, through its charitable donation foundations Alcon Foundation and Alcon Cares, has been a generous supporter of Orbis for over forty years, providing monetary donations and state-of-the-art ophthalmic equipment, surgical products, and supplies for Orbis's Flying Eye Hospital and partner hospitals around the world. Alcon's expert biomedical engineers and trainers also participate in Orbis programs, sharing their skills and knowledge to help program participants learn to operate and maintain critical medical technology.

“Alcon is proud of our more than 40-year partnership with Orbis, as we’ve worked together to improve volume and access to quality eye care that benefits underserved populations in communities around the world,” said David Endicott, CEO of Alcon. “We are pleased to welcome participating learners to our Fort Worth Alcon Experience Center where they will have hands-on experience with Alcon surgical equipment to build their skills and confidence in eye care techniques such as Phaco cataract, medical retina and glaucoma procedures.”

Globally, Alcon operates 10 AECs along with 26 training centers and 42 wet labs where training is focused on upskilling ophthalmologists and optometrists so that they are proficient in the latest techniques and technologies.

This year, Orbis is also celebrating 40 years since the Flying Eye Hospital took its first flight. Since 1982, three generations of the Flying Eye Hospital have taken training to eye care teams in over 95 countries around the world. In 2020, Orbis reimagined in-person Flying Eye Hospital trainings as virtual ones to ensure that eye care teams could still access critical training safely during the pandemic. Orbis reached nine countries in 2020 and 34 countries in 2021 through virtual Flying Eye Hospital projects. With the plane now returning to in-person programming, the virtual model Orbis developed is being used in conjunction with in-person training, a concept known as “blended learning,” to ensure that participants can maximize the time with their mentors, continue their education after the plane leaves and more.

Globally, 1.1 billion people live with vision loss, and 90% of cases are completely avoidable.‡ Nine out of ten people with vision loss live in low- and middle-income countries,§ where quality eye care is often difficult, sometimes impossible, to access. An effective, lasting solution to this challenge is to ensure that eye care professionals in such countries can access quality ophthalmic training, building the skills they need to provide quality eye care to patients in their communities.

Over the past four decades, Orbis has conducted tens of millions of eye screenings and performed eye surgeries and laser treatments for hundreds of thousands of patients. Orbis has also trained hundreds of thousands of eye care professionals at all levels, including tens of thousands of medical doctors. The people Orbis trains go on to provide sight-saving care in their communities and, in many cases, go on to train eye care professionals themselves.

About Orbis

Orbis is a leading global non-governmental organization that has been a pioneer in the prevention and treatment of avoidable blindness for four decades. Orbis transforms lives by delivering the skills, resources and knowledge needed to deliver accessible quality eye care. Working in collaboration with local partners, including hospitals, universities, government agencies and

‡ <https://www.iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas>

§ <https://www.iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas/inequality-in-vision-loss>

ministries of health, Orbis 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](#). For the past ten consecutive years, Orbis has achieved [Charity Navigator](#)'s coveted four-star rating for demonstrating strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency, placing Orbis in the top 3% of U.S. charities. In 2021, Orbis earned [GuideStar](#)'s platinum Seal of Transparency. To learn more, please visit [orbis.org](#).

About Alcon

Alcon helps people see brilliantly. As the global leader in eye care with a heritage spanning over 75 years, we offer the broadest portfolio of products to enhance sight and improve people's lives. Our Surgical and Vision Care products touch the lives of more than 260 million people in over 140 countries each year living with conditions like cataracts, glaucoma, retinal diseases and refractive errors. Our more than 24,000 associates are enhancing the quality of life through innovative products, partnerships with Eye Care Professionals and programs that advance access to quality eye care. Learn more at [www.alcon.com](#).

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