



IAPB VISION 2020 Workshops: ROP Europe: 2015-17 Eye Samaritans International

In 2015 – 17 IAPB would like to build on the work to date and expand to new countries in order to ensure that we leave a lasting legacy in how infants at risk of ROP are managed and to reduce the numbers becoming blind from ROP.

South East Europe

In 2015 we would like to follow up contacts made during the ROP course IAPB sponsored at the annual [South East European Ophthalmological Society \(SEEOS\) conference](#), to identify a group of countries from the South East European region to work with in providing technical advice to their national ROP programmes. IAPB hopes to work with a group of 4-6 countries who have expressed an interest in getting involved, who have a clear need, who are ready to work together and support each other. IAPB would then work with these countries to arrange a ROP workshop which would include teams responsible for the screening and treatment of infants at risk of ROP from NICU's in these countries. The nurses, neonatologists and ophthalmologists would work together in interactive group sessions to address how they can develop their national ROP programmes. A similar approach was adopted with the Black Sea countries. At this South East Europe workshop each country will identify actions needed to advance how they manage different aspects of ROP screening and treatment, and how they might mentor and support each other, again as is happening in Black Sea countries. These action plans will be the catalyst for change and also guide us in how we can facilitate the change.

Romania

At the 2013 ROP workshop in Budapest the Romanian participants requested a national workshop to help them address weaknesses in their ROP screening and treatment. This workshop will be held in March 2015 and will bring together neonatologists, neonatal nurses and ophthalmologists to review their national programme and procedures and identify ways to strengthen them, focussing on how to speed up referrals from neonatologists to ophthalmologists if an infant is considered at risk. At the workshop an action plan will be developed which will identify the next steps to strengthen the national ROP programme for Romania. It will also be an opportunity to explore establishing an indirect laser training centre.

Russia

In Russia a request has been received for a second ROP workshop to be held in Yekaterinburg. This is a very significant step forward and illustrates the level of confidence the national advisor to the Ministry of Health on child eye health has in the team and recognition that IAPB's support to Russia has been beneficial to developing the ROP programme. This workshop is planned for 2016 and will involve teams from NICUs in the city and also across the region of Sverdlovsk Oblast, possibly other regions as well. One outcome of this workshop would be to identify if there are further training needs for lead ophthalmologists in this region.

Further observerships for VR surgery for ROP are needed for Russia. The programme has already sponsored one observership and on her return to Moscow her waiting list for VR surgery has already reduced from two years to one year. This indicates an area of real need. Linked to these observerships, IAPB would like to explore the possibility of establishing a training or mentoring programme for new VR surgeons to be trained alongside those who have benefitted from an observership i.e. to start cascading training. The mechanism for how this would work needs to be discussed further with the partners.

As the relationship with our partners strengthens it will allow opportunities to explore working with the neonatologists to establish a national network. A second area to explore further would be using telemedicine, especially since the Ministry has funded the purchase of Retcams for each unit.

Georgia

At the Budapest workshop it became evident that Georgia was the country in the most difficult situation and in most need. A laser has been secured and it is expected to be in place by March 2015. Following this three ophthalmologists from Georgia will travel to Moscow to train with Dr Astasheva on laser techniques for two weeks. Dr Astasheva was sponsored by IAPB to train in India in 2013 where she spent a month being exposed to all aspects of ROP programme management. She is now a valuable resource for the region and we hope she will be able to provide further training for neighbouring countries.

Bulgaria

The ROP programme in Bulgaria is managed in two parts – the East and the West. Currently both sides working independently and there is a lack of national leadership. At the 2013 Budapest workshop it was suggested that two ophthalmologists be sent to India, one from the East and one from the West to help alleviate this situation. IAPB would like to arrange for this training in 2015 and from this it is hoped that the exposure to an exceptionally well managed programme, in partnership with the new skills learnt, will provide the impetus for kick starting a national ROP programme when they return.

Other activities

In the Black Sea region workshop, it became apparent that **Turkey** was well placed to provide support to other countries from that region in the form of training opportunities and observerships. **Moldova** has already been in contact with colleagues in Turkey for ROP training. In 2015 and 2016 IAPB would like to provide some seed funding to help support these emerging initiatives.

Research:

In 2014 key ophthalmologists in 5 countries were identified to be trained to carry out a blind school survey in their country. There is very little data on ROP in the region and one way to start to gather a picture of the level of the problem is to conduct blind school surveys. One study has been undertaken in Budapest, Hungary, showing that a very high proportion of children in the school there are blind from ROP. Each key ophthalmologist has been contacted and has been sent the CD of the World Health Organization survey methodology. It is envisaged that they will need some support as they pilot the methodology before they go on to do surveys, which can be provided by one the UK team.

Budget:

Regional SEE ROP workshop	\$ 45,000
Romania ROP Workshop	\$ 15,000
Russia ROP Workshop	\$ 20,000
Bulgaria + Georgia – ROP training	\$ 20,000
Other training initiatives	\$10,000
Research	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$ 120,000