



# EYE BANK ASSOCIATION of AMERICA

## Background Programs Services

### RESTORING SIGHT THROUGH THE PROMOTION AND ADVANCEMENT OF EYE BANKING

The Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA) is a not-for-profit organization of eye banks dedicated to the restoration of sight through the promotion and advancement of eye banking. Established in 1961 by the American Academy of Ophthalmology's Committee on Eye Banks, EBAA member eye banks are located across the United States, Puerto Rico, and internationally in Canada, England, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Japan and Taiwan. These member eye banks make possible more than 50,000 sight restoring transplants annually.

As the oldest national transplantation association, the EBAA has led the transplantation field with the establishment of medical standards for the procurement and distribution of eyes, comprehensive education programs for technicians, and accreditation of eye banks. These standards and certification programs have been used as models for other transplantation associations. The EBAA established an independent Certification Board in 1998 to develop policy and provide oversight for the certification of eye bank technicians.

#### THE NEED FOR EYE BANKS

An eye bank procures, evaluates, and distributes ocular tissue, provided through donation, for use in corneal transplantation, research, and education. To ensure patient safety, donated corneas and donor medical histories are evaluated based on strict EBAA Medical Standards. Eyes that cannot be used for transplantation may be used for valuable research. To become an eye donor, individuals should first inform their family members of their donation wishes and then indicate their intention on donor cards and/or a driver's license.

#### THE NEED FOR CORNEAL TRANSPLANTS

Each year, over 50,000 individuals benefit from corneal transplantation. Visual loss from corneal disease compromises quality of life, making it difficult for people to do "everyday things," such as read street signs or food labels. This tragic loss of vision may result from congenital corneal disease, infection, trauma, chemical burns, or corneal swelling.

Worldwide, over 42 million people are visually impaired. In the United States alone, 80 million people suffer from a potentially blinding disease and 10 million office visits are made each year for corneal problems. Visual impairment costs the U.S. government approximately \$4 billion annually in benefits and lost taxable income. The cost to support one blind person for a lifetime is approximately \$1 million.

Fortunately, through the medical miracle of corneal transplantation, sight restoration is possible. Since there is no substitute for human tissue, the transplantation process depends upon the priceless gift of eye donation from one human to another. The mission of the EBAA and its member eye banks is to facilitate and safeguard this gift and its transfer from donor to recipient. With a success rate of over 95% in saving and improving vision, transplants bring light to the world of people from all walks of life--from the very young to the very old.

#### PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

##### PHYSICIAN PROGRAM

Through membership in the Paton Society, eye bank medical directors, corneal surgeons, and ophthalmologists stay connected to current issues pertinent to physicians involved in corneal transplantation and eye banking. Timely forums provide discussion regarding new findings in corneal surgery, research and eye banking as well as difficult case studies. Paton Society members receive the *Cornea* journal, annual eye banking statistical report, Medical Standards, and the EBAA membership directory, along with discounts on EBAA meeting registration and free admission to the Federated Scientific Session, held annually in conjunction with the Cornea Society.

##### TECHNICIAN EDUCATION SEMINAR, CERTIFICATION EXAM AND RECERTIFICATION

To maintain high technical standards, the EBAA offers technician education seminars and certification exams semiannually. To be designated as a "Certified Eye Bank Technician (CEBT)," an applicant must pass a rigorous electronic examination. Eye bank technicians must maintain their certification by meeting or exceeding the EBAA technician continuing education requirements. Certification is granted for a period of three years, with renewal gained through continuing professional development.

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

EBAA continually strives to strengthen its member services and support through:

- \*Quality Control Programs
- \*Professional Development Programs
- \*Public/Professional Awareness Campaigns
- \*Advocacy
- \*Scientific Research Grants

## QUALITY CONTROL PROGRAMS

### MEDICAL STANDARDS

EBAA member banks strive to ensure a safe and sufficient supply of corneas for the public. The EBAA Medical Standards require member banks to maintain the high proficiency in ocular tissue procurement, preservation, storage, and transplantation. EBAA Medical Standards are endorsed by the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) and are updated bi-annually.

### EYE BANK ACCREDITATION

The EBAA is the only recognized accrediting body for eye banks. Utilizing EBAA's strict medical standards, eye bank accreditation site inspections are performed to ensure quality control. Following initial accreditation, an eye bank is reinspected at least once every three years. For an up-to-date list of accredited eye banks, visit the EBAA's Web site at [www.restoresight.org/eye\\_banks/eye\\_banks.htm](http://www.restoresight.org/eye_banks/eye_banks.htm).

## EBAA PUBLICATIONS

*Insight* is EBAA's monthly electronic newsletter. *Insight* includes reports on the most recent newsworthy items regarding scientific advances, legislative priorities, medical procedures, technical and administrative programs, and public/professional educational opportunities.

**Annual Statistical Report on Eye Banking:** Each year, the EBAA publishes a report on the state of eye banking, providing statistics on the number of corneal transplantations performed as well as the number of donors. To obtain a copy of this report, visit the EBAA's Web site at [www.restoresight.org/general/publications.htm](http://www.restoresight.org/general/publications.htm).

## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH GRANTS

Annual research grants are awarded to promote and encourage new research initiatives in the areas of eye banking and corneal transplantation. Up to \$50,000 is awarded each year to researchers investigating corneal donor screening, preservation media supplementation, including antibiotics and growth factors, and graft rejection. Current funding is comprised of donations from The Richard Lindstrom EBAA Fund for Corneal Research.

## ADVOCACY

Eye, organ, and tissue legislation and regulations have made it imperative that the eye banking community have a strong united voice when dealing with Congress and Federal Agencies.

On a national level, the EBAA represents member eye bank priorities and eye banking interests to ensure a safe supply of corneas to meet the public's health needs. Association and membership representation include:

- \*Ongoing meetings/correspondence with Government officials
- \*Testimony and policy statements
- \*Coalition activities with other transplant organizations and medical societies
- \*Statistical/research and information resources

## PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL AWARENESS

Through its public relations and educational programs, the EBAA works to create a positive image of eye donation and corneal transplantation. These programs assist member eye banks in educating the public and professionals to maintain and increase the number of donors necessary to meet the need for corneal tissue for transplantation.

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