



Community Services for Vision Rehabilitation

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www.csvrlowvision.org

September 24, 2015

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Darlene Sartain
The Hindman Foundation

Dear Ms. Sartain:

Thank you and Mr. Hindman for considering support for production and dissemination of a short, but powerful film to help low vision patients. This project, initially suggested by Christopher J. Rapuano, M.D. of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), will have the objective of encouraging ophthalmologists, optometrists, ophthalmic technicians and, indeed, all involved in the care of the visually impaired to educate the patient about all the help available. The project will be supervised by the Vision Rehabilitation Committee of the AAO under the direction of Joe Fontenot, M.D., committee chair and committee member Kirk Packo, M.D.

Those who have lost vision because of such diseases as macular degeneration, diabetic eye disease, glaucoma and other eye problems are unable to read normally, drive, or recognize people. They are unaware of the resources and people available to help.

The video will encourage eye doctors and other health personnel to address the functional, emotional and social needs of those impacted by vision loss. This will be done by stressing the impact of vision loss and suggesting efficient systems for education and referral.

We have the good fortune of obtaining the support of the Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation, which has agreed to match the funds we raise for production, marketing, outreach and distribution (see attached letter from Susan Olivo, Executive Director). We have already received a \$10,000 grant from the Macular Degeneration Foundation (see attached).

The video will be distributed by the American Academy of Ophthalmology (see letter of support from David W. Parke II, M.D., CEO), the American Society of Retina Specialists (ASRS), optometry associations, ophthalmic technician societies (JCHAPO) and others.

This video, and the interest and awareness sparked by it, will help improve the function, independence and quality of life for the millions of people suffering from impaired vision. We are hoping you will help us in this effort by granting \$10,000 of the estimated total cost of \$65,000 - \$70,000 (depending on final marketing costs.) Your grant will be matched by Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation.

Sincerely,

Joseph L. Fontenot, M.D., CLVT

Chair, Vision Rehabilitation Committee
Medical Director
Community Services for Vision Rehabilitation

Kirk A. Packo, M.D.

Member, Rehabilitation Committee
Chair, Department Ophthalmology
Rush Medical Center, Chicago, IL

The Proposal

A short (6 min.) educational video presentation for ophthalmologists (residents and fellows), optometrists, ophthalmology and optometry technicians, and all professionals in eye care. The intent of the video is to raise awareness of the impact of impaired vision and encourage education and referral to low vision rehabilitation services. This project was suggested by the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) to the Vision Rehabilitation Committee. The video is tentatively titled "Lifting Up Your Low Vision Patients"

The Need

The aging of the population and the increased incidence of diabetes has resulted in an increased number of people in the United States with impaired vision. This trend is expected to continue. At the same time, awareness and utilization of the constantly improving techniques and technology to improve the lives of the visually impaired is underutilized and underappreciated by ophthalmologists and optometrists. The education of patients about the availability and potential of low vision rehabilitation and resources has remained low. Low vision rehabilitation and resources have become more accessible, less expensive and of more benefit to the vision impaired than ever. However, the lack of awareness and referral prevents most from receiving these benefits.

This disconnect between the benefits and availability of vision rehabilitation and the low levels of utilization has several causes:

- 1) Lack of knowledge about low vision services
- 2) Eye doctors and their staff not educating and referring
- 3) Inadequate exposure and emphasis on vision rehabilitation during the training of eye doctors
- 4) Denial of vision loss by the patient
- 5) Lack of insurance coverage and funding for aids and devices
- 6) Lack of transportation and family support
- 7) Advanced age and co-morbidities of some older patients

The proposed video would primarily address numbers 1, 2, and 3.

Objective

Vision rehabilitation has been demonstrated to be helpful in maintaining function, quality of life, independence and prevent depression in visually impaired patients. The objective of this video is to increase awareness and utilization of low vision rehabilitation and resources by raising empathy and referrals by ophthalmologists, optometrists, members of the integrated eye care team, professionals in training, and professional organizations.

The Vision Rehabilitation Committee (VRC) and the AAO will work with other organizations, such as the American Society of Retina Specialists (ASRS) and other subspecialist societies to help make ophthalmologists and optometrists active in promoting awareness and utilization of low vision rehabilitation. The ASRS has agreed in principle to this, and others are expected to join in supporting this project.

The production and promotion of such a video would be part of a campaign to have ophthalmologists, optometrists, and all professionals of the integrated eye care team realize that they should spearhead the provision of any care that will benefit the patient. It will be a first step forward in helping all eye care professionals consider not only the eyes, but the overall quality of life of their patients.

The Video

The video would be short (6 min.) reminding the eye care professional of the impact of vision loss on the individual, their family and society. It would discuss the training, technology and resources now available. The video would urge development of a systematic approach, using ancillary staff and electronic health records. This would minimize the time needed by the eye care professional and ensure that all with low vision are offered education and referral, not just a random few.

Proposed Video Content

The video would include:

1. A very brief synopsis of the frequency and causes of vision loss
2. A brief overview of the impact of vision loss
3. Testimonials from patients who had benefitted from vision rehabilitation
4. Statements from patients urging early education/referral
5. Statements from 1 or 2 low vision specialists
6. Statements from 1 or 2 occupational therapists
7. Very brief demonstration of some aids, devices, apps, etc.
8. To reduce time and effort required to educate and refer, it would be suggested that technicians, nurses or others designated be allowed to initiate education and referrals.
9. At the end, information regarding additional resources and contacts would be suggested.

Quality and Cost of Production

As the video is intended for a national professional audience and wide distribution, it is important that it be of high quality. Because of the short format it should have immediate and forceful impact. We have reviewed several production companies, and their products. And would prefer to use Lovett Productions, a New York company (see attachment). Mr. Lovett has considerable experience in this field, having already produced a full-length movie on this subject "Going Blind: The Movie", which has been favorably received and widely acclaimed for quality and content. The estimated cost of production, including duplication and initial national distribution, is \$60,000.

Distribution and Promotion

Who would promote the showing of the video and provide additional resources, discussion and follow-up?

- The Vision Rehabilitation committee and its individual members would vigorously promote showings by professional organizations including the AAO, retinal and glaucoma societies and others
- The AAO would encourage state and regional societies to show it (see attachment A)
- The American Society of Retina Specialists (ASRS) has indicated their support and will promote the showing of the video
- The American Optometric Association would be encouraged to do likewise
- The Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCHPO), the primary organization for Ophthalmic Technicians, will participate and help show the video
- The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)

Beyond the aforementioned production and initial distribution costs, there will be additional costs to support a strong marketing and promotion effort. The funds raised above the production cost will be used for this effort. We estimate a need of approximately \$5,000, bringing the total cost to \$65,000.

Outcomes: Assessing the Impact of the Video

1. There will be a tag line at the end of the video with e-mail address for those desiring further information, help in improving vision rehabilitation services in their practice or institution. The impact of the video in different geographic areas, sites, and probable number of low vision patient impacted will be estimated.
2. Whenever the video is shown at a regional meeting, evaluation will be sought by inclusion of the video in the general questionnaire about the program as a whole.
3. The few specific areas where there are pre-existing data regarding patterns of education and referral for low vision rehabilitation services will be re-evaluated after showings of the video
4. Other methods of evaluation will be constantly sought and opinions obtained as the video develops.

Attachments

A. Supporting Letter from Susan Olivo, Reader's Digest Partners for Sight

Dr. Joseph Fontenot
Community Services for Vision Rehabilitation
600 Bell Air Blvd, Suite 110
Mobile, AL 36606

March 20, 2015

Dear Dr. Fontenot

The Board of Directors of Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation discussed your grant request in support of the low vision film project at our March 11, 2015 meeting. I am pleased to tell you that the Board is very supportive of this initiative, as we are quite aware of the need to improve the connection between those in need, and low vision services. We understand that the ophthalmologist is a key player in making this connection, and we fully support the drive to ensure that low vision rehabilitation becomes part of the continuum of care for vision patients. We are also, firsthand, familiar with the medium of film as a powerful communications and messaging tool.

Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation (RDPFS) is willing to provide funding for this film initiative, provided that a detailed, realistic, and committed distribution plan is put in place to maximize the film's exposure to appropriate audiences. We are also willing to have some of the funds be used for distribution purposes. To that end, RDPFS would like to offer you a challenge grant to help you raise the full amount of necessary funding for this project. RDPFS will match your fundraising, dollar for dollar, up to a total of \$50,000 (i.e. a total budget of \$100,000 for both film production and distribution.)

We understand that great care will be taken in the messaging of the film, so that audiences are encouraged, and feel empowered to refer patients to low vision rehabilitation resources. We trust that the film will be of highly professional quality, and that the tone and messaging will "stand the test of time" so that the film might be used for several years.

As with all challenge grants issued by RDPFS, we require that any alternative use of funds be authorized in advance in writing by us. Additionally, any significant changes in project and/or organizational leadership should be reported as soon as they are known. We reserve the right to rescind this challenge grant if Community Services for Vision Rehabilitation does not comply with the terms.

Thank you for bringing this project to our attention – we wish you much success. My suggestion for next steps is to finalize the distribution plans and budget, as well as the budget for film production, and then begin to seek other funding partners for the project. We should also discuss a proposed timeline for the project and for the challenge grant. Our challenge grants typically extend over a one year period.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Also, if you think it helpful, I would be happy to draft a separate letter to potential funding partners, explaining our belief in and support of this project.

Sincerely,

Susan Olivo
Executive Director

B. Supporting letter from Dr. David Parke, CEO of the American Academy of Ophthalmology



March 9, 2015

Susan Olivo
Executive Director
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David W. Parke II., M.D.
*Executive Vice President and
CEO*

Dear Ms. Olivo:

The American Academy of Ophthalmology is pleased to submit this letter of support for a short-length video project to raise awareness in the ophthalmology community of the extensive vision rehabilitation resources currently available for low vision patients. As part of the development process, the Academy is ready to leverage its extensive education, communications, public relations, and state-level ophthalmic society resources to ensure the widest dissemination of this content to ensure ophthalmologists recognize visual rehabilitation as part of the continuum of care and ensure low vision patients make the most of their remaining vision.

We look forward to partnering with the Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation on this important project. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



David W. Parke II, MD CEO

