

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Eliminate misconceptions re diabetes-related eye problems Urges Orbis on October 9 World Sight Day**

To raise awareness of global blindness, over 100 international sight-saving bodies including Orbis have joined the World Health Organization (WHO) and designated the second Thursday of each October as “**World Sight Day**” (WSD). As a truly international sight-saving pioneer, Orbis is using WSD 2014 to focus on Diabetic Retinopathy (aka Diabetic eye or DR) and respectfully urging Hongkongers to understand its possible threat to their sight.

Our world is now suffering from a massive spread of diabetes attributed to increased life expectancy, changing lifestyles and poor eating habits. Given the disease’s worryingly rapid spiral, DR has been identified as not only a particularly serious complication but also a major cause of blindness. Sadly, as many DR sufferers show no obvious early-to mid-stage symptoms, they simply do not realize they have DR until it is too late. Unfortunately, most diabetes sufferers lack knowledge or rely on outdated stereotypes for information about the disease. As a result of these misunderstandings, many now face an increased risk of blindness. Here in Hong Kong, an alarming 700,000 or roughly one in ten of us is diabetic! Some 40% of sufferers here have developed DR and local cases of DR-related blindness are now growing at a rate of around 200 annually. Worse still, the longer someone unknowingly has diabetes, the greater the chances of developing DR. Small wonder the condition is now a major cause of preventable blindness in working adults!

Speaking at the awards ceremony for Orbis’s 2014 WSD campaign, **Dr. Vincent Lee, President of the Hong Kong Ophthalmological Society**, outlined Hong Kong’s DR crisis and also clarified some common misconceptions about the condition. “Many sufferers think that as they have just been diagnosed with diabetes, they stand little chance of immediately developing DR and so don’t bother seeking help. Worryingly, research shows that roughly one in five newly diagnosed patients has already developed DR. The reason for this is that a lot of newly diagnosed diabetics simply don’t realize that as they have had the disease for some time, DR has already taken root. Should diabetes be diagnosed, it’s ultimately vital for people to have a thorough eye checkup in order to reduce the risk of DR-related complications. Dr. Lee went on to explain that checks are also important during the disease’s early-and mid-stages since symptoms are almost impossible to be detected by patient themselves. Sadly, most people don’t seek medical help until they develop visual problems such as macular edema or vitreous bleeding at which point immediate treatment is required urgently.

Orbis’ other VIP guests at 2014 WSD included two long-term DR patients who spoke movingly of their original ignorance or misconceptions about DR and urged others to avoid the same mistakes! “While I knew that having diabetes meant a long battle involving a strictly disciplined diet, I never imagined it would rob me of nearly all of my sight!”, said Mr. Yuen. Initially diagnosed with diabetes and DR simultaneously nine years ago, Ricky now has less than 10% vision in his left eye and just 20% in his right eye. Determined to set an example for others, he strongly urged everyone to never underestimate the potential damage diabetes can cause and immediately seek, a comprehensive eye examination upon diagnosis.

2014 WSD’s ‘See What Eyes Can See’ theme was designed to remind everyone of the preciousness of sight and also encourage different parties, institutions, schools and the general public to wear Orbis badges to show their concern over visual impairment worldwide.” Ultimately, over 22,000 people from some 342 corporations and schools have helped this year’s campaign raise over HK\$5,000,000 for the needlessly blind since its June 2014 launch. “Determined to slow the speedy spread of DR, ourselves and our donors have now began establishing long-term DR prevention and treatment programs in developing countries such as China, Mongolia and Bangladesh. 2014 WSD offers us yet another vital opportunity to call on supporters from all walks of life to join the battle to one day rid the world of this form of needless blindness,” **said Mary Lau, Development Director of Orbis China and Hong Kong.**

**One Badge! One Chance! So donate HK\$100 and change a life!**

Today's your last chance to get an Orbis badge by donating HK\$100 to Orbis at Circle K stores in MTR stations .  
For more information about World Sight Day, please visit [www.orbis.org/hkwsd](http://www.orbis.org/hkwsd)

**WSD 2014 Roll of Honor**

**Top Five Fundraising Organizations**

- Champion : Collyer Logistics International Limited
- 1st Runner-up : Sunny Creations Limited
- 2nd Runner-up : Mr. Rusy M. Shroff, BBS, MBE, and Mrs. Purviz R. Shroff
- 3rd Runner-up : Inland Revenue Department Sports Association
- 4th Runner-up : Chen Yang Foo Oi Foundation Limited

**Top Five Organizations with the Most Participants**

- Champion : Inland Revenue Department Sports Association
- 1st Runner-up : Optical 88 Ltd.
- 2nd Runner-up : Building Department
- 3rd Runner-up : Hong Kong Wing On Travel Service Limited
- 4th Runner-up : Canon Hong Kong Company Limited

**Photo Captions:**



Hong Kong Ophthalmological Society President Dr. Vincent Lee outlined Hong Kong's DR crisis and also clarified some common misconceptions about the condition.



Two long-term DR patients who spoke movingly of their original ignorance or misconceptions about DR and urged others to avoid the same mistakes!



The 2014 awards ceremony saw Dr. Vincent Lee and Ms. Mary Lau join Orbis WSD Ambassador Roger Kwok officiating the "Action for sight" ceremony to remind everyone of the preciousness of sight.