

**Citation for the Award of Honorary Fellowship
of
The Royal College of Ophthalmologists
Marcia Zondervan**

Mr President, Members of Council, Fellows, Diplomats, Ladies and Gentlemen.
It is my pleasure to present this citation for Marcia Zondervan.

Marcia was born into a farming family at Guelf, near Toronto in Canada, the 3rd. of 6 children. She trained as a nurse being awarded a Diploma in Nursing and then a Diploma in Tropical Diseases.

I first met Marcia in 1984 when she came to Tanzania to gain experience in Tropical Ophthalmology. After an internship with us she went to The Gambia and worked for 3 years at a rural clinic being responsible for the diagnosis and management of patients with eye diseases.

In 1988 she was appointed the Regional Adviser for Eye Care for West and Central Africa for CBM (a large international NGO working in eye care). Over the next 11 years she trained eye care workers from countries as far apart as Guinea Bissau and Democratic Republic of Congo and worked with many eye hospitals to improve eye care particularly in francophone Africa.

After 18 years of living and working in Africa, Marcia came to the UK and undertook a Masters in Business Administration at Durham University before being recruited by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in 2002 initially to undertake an Evaluation of Trachoma Control in 8 African countries and then in 2004 to start and lead what has come to be known as the VISION 2020 LINKS or Health Partnership programme.

The aim of the VISION 2020 LINKS Programme is to increase the quality and quantity of eye care training in Africa through establishing long-term, mutually beneficial health partnerships. The first step is to define the priority need of the African institution and then match them with an appropriate NHS hospital. Joint visits are then undertaken at the end of which a detailed Activity Plan and Memorandum of Understanding between the partner hospitals is agreed and signed by senior management support in the UK and African hospitals.

The Programme involves the whole eye department – ophthalmologists, optometrists, orthoptists, nurses and other staff and makes their expertise available to African eye departments over the long-term. This helps the African partner build their capacity to meet the needs of the population they serve and

also benefits the UK partner in terms of clinical exposure to different pathologies and working environments. There are now over 30 VISION 2020 partnerships in existence that Marcia has developed over the last 14 years.

One example of a successful LINK is that between COECSA (the College of Ophthalmology of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, covering 11 countries), and our own College. In the decade since it was established there have been major improvements in COECSA, including development of Fellowship examinations; harmonised training curriculum in the region; research and medical leadership capacity-building. By helping to develop COECSA, the Royal College of Ophthalmology in the UK is playing an important role in improving the quality of eye care provided to over 250 million people living in East and Central Africa.

As well as the individual LINKS a new initiative has been to develop networks of LINKS working together on specific eye care problems in multiple countries. These networks include diabetic retinopathy, retinoblastoma and leadership in eye care.

Marcia has been responsible and led the UK International Eye Health Partnership programme over the last 14 years, and she is now assisting Australia and the USA to develop similar programmes respectively in the Pacific and Latin America.

Marcia combines passion for the cause, which is good accessible eye care for people living in low income settings, together with professionalism and hard work. She has great diplomacy skills, a "never give up" attitude, and humility, which colleagues in the UK and Africa find persuasive, motivating and inspiring.

Having explained to you who Marcia is and what she has done to justify an Honorary Fellowship let me close by mentioning why? Marcia's driving force is her strong Christian belief. This she upholds in word and deed while never being judgemental or critical of those with other beliefs or none. For her to share God's love with those who are marginalised from mainstream development is her motivation for life.

I am delighted that the College has decided to recognise an amazing lady who passionately, yet humbly, continues to improve the eye care of literally millions of people around the world.

Allen Foster