Moorfields Eye Hospital

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IMPROVING THE WORLD’S EYE CARE STANDARDS IS ANYTHING BUT BLIND AMBITION

The world’s oldest eye hospital is certainly not stuck in the dark ages as it continues to innovate and astound the global health community.

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Moorfields Eye Hospital’s international expansion and continuous innovation within the ophthalmology sector is ensuring it remains at the top of the industry, despite the testing economic climate.

Founded in 1805, Moorfields is the world’s oldest specialist eye hospital, but even after 200 years of care, the holy grail of curing preventable blindness remains the ultimate goal.

**Preventing Blindness**

With a presence across 20 sites in and around the English capital city, the largest eye hospital in the developed world has established a meticulous system of research, training and treatment, which is paying dividends in the technological age.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) John Pelly is the man “privileged” to have the task of overseeing operations at the hospital and he has witnessed great strides made even in his relatively short four year tenure.

“There is a huge amount going on to improve the diagnosis of treatments of all parts of the eye,” he says.

“Most people think about eye surgery as cataracts, and that is about half of our surgical workload, but we also do every other procedure and
investigation that is available to do on the eye.”

For every area of the small organ, Moorfields has discrete sub-specialties; each comprising between seven and 15 consultants, highlighting the range of expertise available to treat the full range of ailments.

More than 500,000 patient episodes are handled behind the famous doors each year – a number which continues to rise annually – and as Pelly describes, the ability to cure the most serious of eye diseases is now becoming reality.
“The way in which cataracts surgery happens now is very clever. Through the use of tiny incisions, you remove the old lens, and insert an artificial one which unfolds in the eye in a natural position. It’s a very quick operation and the most cost effective surgical intervention in medicine, full stop!

“We’re also heavily involved in gene therapy and here at Moorfields, we did the world’s first ocular gene therapy back in 2008, alongside our academic partners at the Institute of Ophthalmology, a division of University College London,” the CEO continues.

Research into stem cell therapy is also proving to be groundbreaking as the hospital’s scientists continue to try and find a cure for age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

While wet AMD has been conquered in the last two
years, the dry form accounts for 90 percent of all examples and promises to be the focal point of researchers’ attentions for the foreseeable future.

**SPREADING THE WORD**

To limit Moorfields’ knowledge and reputation to just the UK is something that Pelly perceives as a waste, and using the leverage that the brand brings globally, he has spent the last four years establishing an influence overseas.

“We opened our branch in Dubai in 2007 and the reasoning behind that was a recognition that Moorfields did have this extraordinarily good reputation and a recognised brand,” Pelly says.

“We’re now there for the long term and the questions for us are whether to replicate that again in the Middle East or maybe further afield.”

Moorfields’ philanthropic influence is also ensuring the future of eye care on an international scale, with the aim of providing a legacy of quality treatment not
just in the developed world, but the developing world also.

Pelly says, “We have an initiative running in Ghana for which we have been fund raising for the last four or five years to raise £3 million to build a new eye centre for the main teaching centre in Accra.

“The main purpose of this was not to build a new eye department, but to run training courses for ophthalmologists; to enable the population of Ghana and the wider West African region to gain access to eye care.”

THE MOORFIELDS MISSION
The strategy behind Moorfields’ ongoing success consists of a threefold strategy, attending to the cycle of healthcare and medical innovation from start to finish.

“The first element of our mission is diagnosing and treating eye problems and we do that very successfully to huge numbers of patients,” says the CEO.

The second strand focuses on the research done in-house at Moorfields, ranging from the basic required sciences to the translational and clinical studies; all of which is carried out alongside the Institute of Ophthalmology at University College London.

“Between us and them, we run one of the strongest and most extensive eye research programmes in the
world,” Pelly says. “The third strand of our mission is education and training and we take great pride in what we do in respect to that. We have a large training programme for specialist registrars and fellows. Everyone wants to be trained at Moorfields.

“We understand that more than half of all practicing ophthalmologists in the UK have spent some of their time being trained at Moorfields and a good number overseas too.”

ADAPTING TO THE TIMES
To be at the top of its respective field for over 200 years, Moorfields has had to adapt and conform to numerous trends and challenges over the decades, but it is its age which presents today’s most pressing issue.

The current site has been in occupation since 1899, and Pelly is aware that a building over 100 years old is not ideally suited to modern day healthcare.

“We have to design and raise funds to build a brand new hospital. We’re looking at either rebuilding or moving and we’ve looked at a number of different sites.”

This is likely to cost in the region of £150 million though, and this hefty amount brings Pelly on nicely to the next challenge on his agenda.

“One of the big problems for
all parts of the health system in the UK is the economy, and funding for the NHS is not going to be remotely adequate for us or indeed anybody else. What happens in health is the cost of care advances far faster than the GDP growth of the country,” he says.

“What we’ve decided to do is design and implement a transformational change programme which will look at all the fundamentals of how we organise and deliver care, to make us more efficient and cost-effective.

“We’re going to have to make all of that work or we’re going to find quality suffering and that’s not something we at Moorfields will tolerate.

“Excellence is at the hallmark of everything we do and we won’t tolerate a decline in that.”