



# National Ophthalmic Week

**13-15yrs**

**St John Ambulance Australia**

## St John—helping people in Palestine see

### Did you know...

...that over 900 years ago St John established a hospital in Jerusalem? Jerusalem is the capital of Israel which is located in the Middle East. This hospital still operates today just south of Jerusalem and is known as the St John Eye Hospital. The health professionals that work at the hospital work hard at helping the people of Palestine with the widespread problem of eye disease. They are the only provider of crucial eye care in the occupied Palestinian territory.

### Fact ...

The rate of blindness is 10 times higher in Palestine than in any other developed country, such as Australia.

### About occupied Palestine

Palestine is located right next to Israel. Palestine is an area that has experienced a lot of fighting and violence for hundreds of years. Conflict still happens there today, with fighting often breaking out between Palestine and Israel.

As a result of the conflict, there is a lot of poverty and hardship, and access to specialist health care (like nurses, doctors and specialist health professionals) is not easy to come by. Not only do people there not have the money to access health care, it is dangerous to travel in the area due to the armed conflict.

In Palestine, many children experience serious eye complications such as glaucoma, cataracts and trauma-related injuries, from a young age. A lot of eye disease in Palestine is a result of poor health such as diabetes and poor diet. These problems are also made worse by not being able to access health care when it is needed.

### Discussion point

Could you imagine if you had an eye problem, not being able to get to a doctor to be provided with care for the condition? What would you do in this situation?

### How does St John Ambulance Australia help?

Each year, St John in Australia raises money to support the important work of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem. The funds from St John in Australia go towards funding outreach nurses who visit people in their communities, bringing health care to people in need. This hospital is the only charitable provider of crucial eye care in the occupied Palestinian territory, treating tens of thousands of patients each year. This is why your help during Ophthalmic Week matters.

### Discussion point

What do you know about the Middle East? What do you think the environment is like there? How do you think people access food and water in a desert environment?

## Ahmed's story

Ahmed Elnajar lives in the Gaza Strip in a refugee camp with his parents, two brothers and three sisters. His house is small and only has two rooms. His father is currently unemployed, so there is very little money supporting the family.

Ahmed was hit in his right eye with a stone and his vision began to deteriorate. Ahmed started to have very blurry vision with black patches or spots. His father became worried about this when Ahmed was being teased at school because of the problem with his eye, so he took Ahmed to the local eye hospital in Gaza. The doctors there said Ahmed had developed a cataract (we will learn about cataracts shortly). Ahmed had surgery to try and fix the problem, but it was unsuccessful. It didn't look like Ahmed would ever regain his sight.

Several relatives and neighbours suggested to Ahmed's father that he take Ahmed to the St John Eye Hospital. They said the service was free, so Ahmed's family did not have to worry about payment. He did this, and Ahmed was immediately scheduled to have an operation to remove the cataract and replace it with a special synthetic (or man-made) lens that would help Ahmed see again. The operation was a great

## What are cataracts?

Imagine looking at the world through a heavily smudged or dirty window.

Cataracts are the leading cause of blindness in the world, particularly in developing countries. The World Health Organisation (2011) estimates that of the 284 million people in the world affected with a visual impairment, 33% are affected by cataract blindness.

### How someone knows if they had cataracts?

The condition can vary in severity, starting with slight blurring of vision or haziness (like the smudged window scenario or like trying to look through heavy fog), light sensitivity or a loss of seeing the brightness of colours. It can gradually become very severe if left untreated, causing blindness.



This is what it is like to live with a mild case of cataract blindness. Cataracts can become much worse; they can even cause blindness—a total blackout.

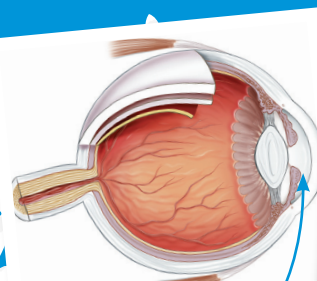


Ahmed

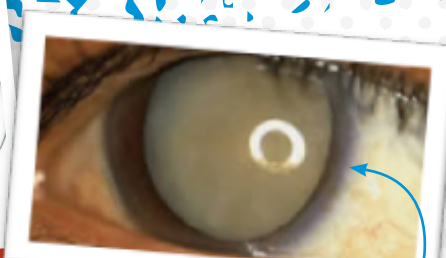


Ahmed playing soccer after his operation.

success and Ahmed can now play with his friends and read and study at school. His family is very grateful for the help that St John freely gave.



Lens



Eye with mature cataract

### How and why do people get cataracts?

Cataracts occur when the natural lens of the eye becomes cloudy or damaged (locate the lens of the eye in the diagram above). The natural lens should be clear. When it becomes cloudy, it affects the way the eye's lens interprets light, causing haziness or blurring of vision.

For some people, cataracts are the result of disease (such as diabetes), poor diet or trauma involving injury to the lens of the eye (such as being exposed to chemicals or like Ahmed, being hit in the eye with a stone). There are also things that increase the risk of developing cataracts such as smoking, poor diet and unprotected exposure to the sun. This is why it is important to always have a healthy lifestyle and diet, and to keep your eyes shielded from the sun with a good pair of sunglasses!

## Discussion point

How do you think Ahmed felt about his situation? What would you do if you were bullied?

## Activities

### Activity 1—Life with cataract blindness

You are going to spend a little time walking in Ahmed's shoes.

#### Step 1—Pair up

#### Step 2—Get your craft on!

You and your partner are going to create a pair of glasses. They are not normal glasses though! They are going to impair your vision to give you an idea of what it is like to experience cataracts.

Your leader will give you a template for creating your glasses and will have available all the materials you need. You might like to decorate your glasses if you have time.

First cut the glasses out by following the dotted line, including cutting out where the lenses would be (the bit you see through). Using the clear cellophane that your leader has provided, stick enough cellophane on the back of your glasses to create a lens (use glue or tape). Do this for both sides.

Now, using a black texta, create a few black splotches on your right lens only (smudge it a bit), then smear some Vaseline over it. Your left lens stays untouched. You're best using the Vaseline on the front side of your glasses, so that the materials don't get into your eyes.

#### Step 3—Walking in Ahmed's shoes

With your partner, choose who will wear the glasses first. Your leader will give you a special task (or tasks) that you need to do with your special glasses on. Put them on and with the help of your partner, take a few minutes to complete the activity. Your partner's job is to help you if you need it. Once one person has had a turn, swap roles.

#### Step 4—Brainstorm this

Your leader will ask you to come back to the larger group. They will then lead a brainstorm on two topics:

1. What it was like to wear the glasses?
2. Think about what kinds of things having cataracts would prevent you from doing in your life?

### Activity 2—Wounds to the eye

With a partner, you are going to practice bandaging a person with a wound to the eye. Your leader will have a copy of Australian First Aid (AFA) or a print-out of the relevant page in the AFA which will demonstrate the steps involved.

The catch is that you are going to do it ... blindfolded! Good luck!

## Further interest question

Find out what an intraocular lens implant is, what it is for and what it does, and report back at your next divisional meeting. Some useful websites or pages for finding this information are:

<http://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/iols.htm>  
[http://www.hollows.org.au/Assets/Files/info\\_sheet\\_cataract\\_blindness.pdf](http://www.hollows.org.au/Assets/Files/info_sheet_cataract_blindness.pdf)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intraocular\\_lens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intraocular_lens)

## Like this topic?

Then why not complete the Eye Health Interest Badge? Talk to your leader about it today!

## Bibliography

[http://www.hollows.org.au/Assets/Files/info\\_sheet\\_cataract\\_blindness.pdf](http://www.hollows.org.au/Assets/Files/info_sheet_cataract_blindness.pdf)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intraocular\\_lens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intraocular_lens)  
<http://kidshealth.org/kid/growup/conditions/cataracts.html#>  
[http://www.rsb.org.au/Vision\\_Information/Cataracts.aspx](http://www.rsb.org.au/Vision_Information/Cataracts.aspx)  
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs282/en/>

Notes

# National Ophthalmic Week

St John Ambulance Australia





**St John—helping people in Palestine see**

***In celebration of National Ophthalmic Week***

## **Trainers' Guide**

**Target audience for course: 13–15 year olds**



## » Icons used

Below is the icon that will be used throughout this Trainers Guide:



This icon will alert you to your tasks as the trainer for this National Ophthalmic Week workshop.

## » Reading and resources

The National Ophthalmic Week *St John helping people in Palestine see* resource for ages 13 to 15 will be the main resource used in this short workshop.

## » Duration

The nominal duration of this course is approximately one hour.

## » Equipment

Trainers Guide

Handout (13-15)

Photocopies of the Glasses Template—attached, print as many as you will need for your group

Vaseline/petroleum jelly

Black markers

Textas, stickers, pencils

Clear cellophane

Glue or tape

Scissors

Australian First Aid (several copies or copies of *Wounds to the Eye*)

## St John—helping people in Palestine see [13–15]



**Read** the following introduction to your Cadets.

### Did you know...

...that over 900 years ago St John established a hospital in Jerusalem? Jerusalem is the capital of Israel which is located in the Middle East. This hospital still operates today just south of Jerusalem and is known as the St John Eye Hospital. The health professionals' that work at the hospital work hard at helping the people of Palestine with the widespread problem of eye disease. They are the *only* provider of crucial eye care in the occupied Palestinian territory.



### Ask the Cadets to discuss the following questions:

What do you know about the Middle East? What do you think the environment is like there?

### About occupied Palestine

Palestine is located right next to Israel. Palestine is an area that has experienced a lot fighting and violence for hundreds of years. Conflict still happens there today, with fighting often breaking out between Palestine and Israel.

As a result of the conflict, there is a lot of poverty and hardship, and access to specialist health care (like nurses, doctors and specialist health professionals) is not easy to come by. Not only do people there not have the money to access health care, it is dangerous to travel in the area due to the armed conflict.

In Palestine, many children experience serious eye complications such as glaucoma, cataracts and trauma-related injuries, from a young age. A lot of eye disease in Palestine is a result of poor health such as diabetes and poor diet. These problems are also made worse by not being able to access health care when it is needed.



### Ask the Cadets to discuss the following questions

Could you imagine if you had an eye problem, not being able to get to a doctor to be provided with care for the condition? What would you do in this situation?



### Read the follow fact...

The rate of blindness is 10 times higher in Palestine than in any other developed country, such as Australia.

### How does St John Ambulance Australia help?

Each year, St John in Australia raises money to support the important work of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem. The funds from St John in Australia go towards funding outreach nurses who visit people in their communities, bringing health care to people in need. This hospital is the only charitable provider of crucial eye care in the occupied Palestinian territory, treating tens of thousands of patients each year. This is why your help during Ophthalmic Week **matters**.



**Explain** to the Cadets that you are going to read them a story about Ahmed, a boy in Palestine who needed specialist help from eye doctors at the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem.

### Ahmed's story

Ahmed Elnajar lives in the Gaza Strip in a refugee camp with his parents, two brothers and three sisters. His house is small and only has two rooms. His father is currently unemployed, so there is very little money supporting the family.

Ahmed was hit in his right eye with a stone and his vision began to deteriorate. Ahmed started to have very blurry vision with black patches or spots. His father became worried about this when Ahmed was being teased at school because of the problem with his eye, so he took Ahmed to the local eye hospital in Gaza. The doctors there said Ahmed had developed a **cataract** (we will learn about cataracts shortly). Ahmed had surgery to try and fix the problem, but it was unsuccessful. It didn't look like Ahmed would ever regain his sight.

Several relatives and neighbours suggested to Ahmed's father that he take Ahmed to the St John Eye Hospital. They said the service was free, so Ahmed's family did not have to worry about payment. He did this, and Ahmed was immediately scheduled to have an operation to remove the cataract and replace it with a special synthetic (or man-made) lens that would help Ahmed see again.

The operation was a great success and Ahmed can now play with his friends and read and study at school. His family is very grateful for the help that St John freely gave.



### Discussion point

How do you think Ahmed felt about his situation? What would you do if you were bullied?

### What are cataracts?



#### Ask the Cadets to think about the following question:

Can you imagine looking at the world through a heavily smudged or dirty window? (ask the Cadets to refer to their worksheet and look at the following picture)



Then **read** the following:

Cataracts are the leading cause of blindness in the world, particularly in developing countries. The World Health Organisation (2011) estimates that of the 284 million people in the world affected with a visual impairment, 33% are affected by cataract blindness.

#### How would someone know if they had cataracts?

The condition can vary in severity, starting out with slight blurring of vision or haziness (like the smudged window scenario or like trying to look through heavy fog), light sensitivity or a loss of seeing the brightness of colours. It can gradually become very severe if left untreated, causing blindness.

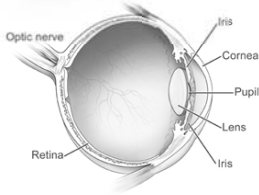
#### How and why do people get cataracts?

Cataracts occur when the natural lens of the eye becomes cloudy or damaged (locate the lens of the eye in the diagram below). The natural lens should be clear. When it becomes cloudy, it affects the way the eye's lens interprets light, causing haziness or blurring of vision.



### Discussion point

Ask the Cadets to take a look at the diagram of an eye on their handout. Point of where the lens is located. Also ask them to take a look at the eye with the cataract and get them to comment on what that looks like. Then continue to read the following:



For some people, cataracts are the result of disease (such as diabetes), poor diet or trauma involving injury to the lens of the eye (such as being exposed to chemicals or like Ahmed, being hit in the eye with a stone). There are also things that increase the risk of developing cataracts such as smoking, poor diet and unprotected exposure to the sun. This is why it is important to always have a healthy lifestyle and diet, and to keep your eyes shielded from the sun with a good pair of sunglasses!



# Activity corner

[13–15]

## Activity 1—Life with cataract blindness



In the following activities, the Cadets are going to spend a little time learning what it feels like to walk in Ahmed's shoes and live with cataracts and to be vision impaired. **Explain** the following activity to them.

### Step 1—Pair Up

Instruct the Cadets to partner up. This is an activity for pairs. You might need to allocate pairs depending on your group.

### Step 2—Get your craft on!

The Cadets are each going to create a pair of glasses. These glasses are not normal and will not help Cadets to see. Instead, they will imitate the dirty window scenario described above.

Handout the glasses worksheet. You will need:

- textas/markers/pencils
- scissors
- clear cellophane
- Vaseline/petroleum jelly
- black markers
- glue or tape.

Ask the Cadets to decorate their glasses (time permitting), and cut them out following the black line. They will need to cut out where the lenses would be and then paste some clear cellophane on the inside to become the lenses.

Ask the Cadets to put a few black splotches on the right lens and smudge it. This needs to happen on **the front side of their glasses** (so that the materials don't get into their eyes), then smear some Vaseline over it. Leave the left lens untouched.

### Step 3—Walking in Ahmed's shoes

Instruct the Cadets that you will give you a special task (or tasks) that they need to do with their glasses on. With the help of their partner, take a few minutes to complete the activity. Their partner's job is to help them if you need it. Once one person has had a turn, swap roles.

Choose from the list below or create your own tasks:

- Replicate the diagram of the eye with its parts labelled in the handout
- Create a house of cards using playing cards
- A quick game of soccer (use the Ophthalmic Week beach ball)
- Fitting a sling
- Bandaging a leg for treatment of a snake bite.

### Step 4—Brainstorm this



#### Group Discussion

When the Cadets have finished having turns, ask them to come back to the group. Ask the Cadets how it felt to wear the glasses. Get the Cadets to think about what kinds of things they would stop doing in their life if they suffered from cataracts.

## Activity 2—Wounds to the eye



**Explain** the following activity to the Cadets.

With a partner the Cadets are going to practice bandaging a person with a *wound to the eye*. They will need a copy *Australian First Aid (AFA)* or a photocopies of the relevant page in the *AFA* which will demonstrate the steps involved (refer to page 243 in the 2010 edition).

The catch is that the cadets are going to do it ... *blindfolded*!

### Further interest question



Whether or not the Cadets complete the following activity is up to you as their trainer or as a personal choice for the Cadets.

Find out what an *intraocular lens implant* is, what it is for and what it does, and have the Cadets report back at the next divisional meeting. Some useful websites or pages for finding this information are:

<http://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/iols.htm>

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intraocular\\_lens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intraocular_lens)



### Conclusion

Give the class 30 seconds to think of something they have learnt in today's class and ask them to report back.

Make sure they recall all topics between the participants. If they miss a topic, ask them specifically. (Topics that should be covered: Palestine, St John Eye Hospital, cataracts, living with a visual impairment.)

*Like this topic? Then why not complete the Eye Health Proficiency Badge?*

### Bibliography

[http://www.hollows.org.au/Assets/Files/info\\_sheet\\_cataract\\_blindness.pdf](http://www.hollows.org.au/Assets/Files/info_sheet_cataract_blindness.pdf)

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<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs282/en/>

