

January 2011

As an avid mountaineer, I began my seven-summit quest by scaling Mt. Blanc in 2005. Last year, I couldn't help but wonder if the summit quest can be used as an opportunity to raise funds for a cause that we all care for in the ophthalmic arena. SummitforCure! was born as a portal<sup>1</sup> for summiting the tallest peaks in every continent on earth and dedicating/raising funds during the course to cure blindness around the world. This past December, I was fortunate to scale Uhuru Peak (5,895 meters or 19,340 feet) on Mt. Kilimanjaro, an inactive stratovolcanic peak in Tanzania, Africa. This was possible largely due to the local Machame and Mweka people of Tanzania who helped with the climb as guides, porters, and cooks. Speaking with them during the course of the climb, we immediately realized how we in the developed world take healthcare for granted. When asked about cataract in their village, the porters reflected on how the aged go blind once their eyes turn white (from cataract). They recollected several aged members of the village who have been blind for years without receiving any treatments. Unnecessary blindness from cataract can be devastating to one's life and family. This is more profound in the developing world, where local conditions and infrastructure do not support the blind. Studies have shown that unnecessary blindness from cataract reduces the life-expectancy rate by at least 1/3<sup>rd</sup>. This is surmounted by the fact that on average there is only a handful of trained cataract surgeon for every million patient population in these unfortunate regions. Even with high volume surgery, the demand is never met and several people remain blind until their death.

The Himalayan Cataract Project<sup>2</sup>, a non-profit organization established by Dr. Sanduk Ruit and Dr. Geoff Tabin<sup>3</sup> continues to transform lives and restore vision in the developing and least-developed world. As discussed in the project<sup>2</sup>, avoidable blindness in least-developed countries in the sub-Saharan Africa is mainly from cataract, glaucoma and corneal opacities. Blindness from cataract can often be easily and safely cured by performing cataract surgery that involves removal of the cataractous lens (e.g. by phacoemulsification) and replacement with an intraocular lens or IOL.

At Santen, we all take pride in providing advanced and high-quality healthcare especially in the field of ophthalmology to patients globally as part of our core values. At Advanced Vision Science, Inc. where we research, develop, and manufacture ophthalmic medical devices, we strive to achieve our goal by developing high-quality intraocular lenses for cataract surgery. I thoroughly enjoy my



role here at AVS as Research and Development Manager under the leadership of our general manager, Margaret Aldred. Based on her suggestion, we targeted to raise \$1/meter for summiting the tallest peak in Africa at 5,895m and let our flags fly high on top of this continent. With the generous support of Advanced Vision Science Inc. and Santen Inc. we have raised funds that would go entirely to the Himalayan Cataract Project for their efforts in sub-Saharan Africa. The Himalayan Cataract Project is a tax-exempt non-profit organization, classified as a 501(c)3 by the Internal Revenue Code. The funding needs are as follows: \$20 can sponsor a cataract surgery that would restore vision for the blind person. \$1,500-\$5,000 provides surgical equipment necessary for the cataract surgery. \$5,000 allows setup of an outreach microsurgical eye clinic or "eye camp" that would restore sight to approximately 250 patients. We hope to achieve this goal with the donations. If you or your team would like to contribute, you can send a check payable to the "Himalayan Cataract Project" to: Andy Doraiswamy, c/o Advanced Vision Science Inc., 5743 Thornwood Dr. Goleta CA, 93117 USA. Santen also intends to support the project with a donation of lenses, which are expected to have a significant impact on the quality of life of many people who would otherwise remain blind. We hope these efforts would have a minor contribution to our vision 2020, in us becoming a global company. We will publish the developments and impact of the support/donations in subsequent issues.

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#### References

1. <http://www.summitforcure.org/>
2. <http://adventure.nationalgeographic.com/2009/12/best-of-adventure/geoff-tabin>
3. <http://www.cureblindness.org/>



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