

horizons



KERATOCONUS

On a Mission

California OD helps establish keratoconus clinic in Kenya with help from Menicon and Blanchard Contact Lens.

When people who live in rural Western Kenya are diagnosed with keratoconus, they have only two treatment options: spectacles or corneal transplantation. Now, however, these patients as well as patients with high myopia or traumatic irregular corneas have a contact lens option, thanks to the work of Yin-Yin Aung, OD, FAAO, and support from Menicon.

Dr. Aung is an attending optometrist at Goodman Eye Center and a clinical instructor at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Optometry. She recently spent a week at Friends Church Sabatia Eye Hospital in Vihiga, Kenya, helping to set up a keratoconus clinic

and teaching staff optometrist Justus Kimaiyo how to fit Rose K specialty lenses. "Now, the hospital is capable of treating irregular cornea cases with contact lenses, which decreases the need to perform expensive and complicated corneal transplantation surgeries," she says. "None of this would be possible without the generous donation of lenses." Blanchard Contact Lens Inc., an authorized manufacturer of Menicon's Rose K family of lenses, donated the diagnostic sets used by Dr. Aung during her visit to Vihiga.

This was not Dr. Aung's first mission trip, but it was her first trip to Kenya, and it was memorable for two rea-

sons. "Of all of the other mission trips I've taken, this was probably the most rewarding for me personally," she says. "Not only is this my field of specialization, but the Sabatia Eye Hospital is a sustainable clinic with a staff optometrist who can now take care of these patients. I know the patients I treated can return to the hospital and receive appropriate follow-up care from Dr. Kimaiyo."

Dr. Aung saw 30 to 40 patients during her week at Sabatia Eye Hospital, most of whom had never had contact lenses on their eyes. "The vast majority of the patients I saw had no history of contact lens wear," she says. "I saw patients



► **Figure 1:** Dr. Yin-Yin Aung, Berkeley, Calif., and Dr. Justus Kimaiyo, staff optometrist at Sabatia Eye Hospital in Kenya, received Rose K lenses from Menicon to assist in their efforts to establish a keratoconus clinic at the hospital.



► **Figure 2:** Friends Church Sabatia Eye Hospital serves approximately 15 million people in western Kenya.

as young as 8 years old with some of the worst keratoconus I've ever seen. Many patients were school-age children who wanted the opportunity to receive higher education. To be able to help a young person see well enough to read and perform optimally is a remarkable experience."

Dr. Aung plans to continue to work remotely with Dr. Kimaiyo to ensure the keratoconus clinic endures. She is prepared to offer her support via video e-mail to help with complicated lens fitting and trouble-shooting. "We could

work together similarly to a satellite clinic," she says, "with Dr. Kimaiyo sending me something as simple as an iPhone video taken through the microscope of a lens on a patient's eye. We haven't set that up yet, mostly because we must secure funding. We are also trying to obtain a grant to help subsidize the cost of the lenses for patients."

Sabatia Eye Hospital is the only independent nonprofit referral center for eye care services for adults and children in Western Kenya. It serves approximately 15 million people in 17 counties and is

a training center for ophthalmologists, cataract surgeons, optometrists, ophthalmic nurses and other health care workers. The hospital reported almost 43,000 patient visits in 2012. ■