

Press Release

[For Immediate Release]

Date: April 14, 2015

Orbis blindfold lunch 2015 educates primary school students and parents who remain unaware of the perils of myopia

Orbis is organising an annual Blindfold Lunch again to enhance children's eye-care awareness and concern for the visually impaired with the continuous and committed support from AXA Hong Kong. Today (April 14), around 100 students of Maryknoll Convent School (Primary Section) participated in the Blindfold Lunch, in the presence of Dr. Flora Lau, Orbis volunteer ophthalmologist, who clarified several common misconceptions regarding myopia and shared simple eye-care tips.

This is the fourth successive year AXA Hong Kong has sponsored the Orbis Blindfold Lunch. As always, the ultimate aim is to educate school kids about the importance of sight protection through eye-care talks and a hands-on blindfold experience.

Nearly 80% of parents did not know that myopia sufferers are at a higher risk of developing cataracts

As parents play such an essential role in delivering eye-care messages to their children, Orbis conducted an "Awareness on myopia among parents" survey this March. 1,290 parents of eyeglass-wearing primary school students were subsequently interviewed on their understanding of the possible effects of myopia on their children. Findings showed that 57.4% of respondents were unaware that myopia sufferers were far more likely to be afflicted by glaucoma and/or retinal detachment. More worryingly, 79.4% of interviewees did not know that myopia sufferers were also far more at risk of developing cataracts.

About half of parents thought that Lasik eye surgery could reduce the risk of developing myopia-related diseases

Lasik sight corrective surgery is becoming increasingly popular amongst Hongkongers who no longer wish to wear glasses. Orbis's recent survey shows that around 39% of interviewees said they had considered letting their children undergo such treatment once they get older. Of these respondents, approximately 48.2% thought Lasik procedures would lower one's risk of developing myopia-related diseases such as glaucoma. "While Lasik eye surgery can correct refractive errors such as myopia, it cannot reduce the risk of developing high myopia-related visual complications," warned Dr. Lau, Orbis volunteer ophthalmologist. "In cases where short sightedness

becomes more severe, the potential for high myopia visual complications such as retinal detachments or tears measurably increase. Sadly, Lasik treatment can do nothing to reduce these risks.”

Nearly 70% of youngsters have inadequate outdoor activities

Dr. Lau went on to say that recent research shows that adequate outdoor activities can reduce short-sightedness amongst children. “According to the Orbis survey, youngsters in Hong Kong spend little time outdoors. In all, over half (66.6%) of interviewed parents stated that their kids spend one hour or more on outdoor activities at least once or twice a week. In fact, outdoor activities stimulate our bodies’ production of a chemical that stops eyeballs from elongating and hence prevents myopia. Parents should encourage their children to spend more time playing outdoors in order to reduce their risk of developing myopia,” Dr. Lau added.

“While kids wearing glasses are everywhere in Hong Kong, it appears that many parents are overlooking the long-term dangers of myopia. Worryingly serious myopia-related conditions often lead to permanent visual impairment and even total blindness. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to AXA Hong Kong for their unstinting backing and for encouraging their staff to serve as volunteers today. Our gratitude must also go to all participating schools and students for their support and dedication,” said Ms. Mary Lau, Director of Development, Orbis China and Hong Kong.

Ms. Andrea Wong, Chief Corporate Responsibility Officer, AXA Hong Kong said, “AXA Hong Kong is delighted and pleased to support this meaningful event for four consecutive years. Throughout these years, we are very excited and proud that over 18,000 primary school students have benefited from this educational event by gaining invaluable eye-care knowledge, and experiencing first hand the challenges faced by the visually impaired. AXA Hong Kong is always committed to contributing back to the society. We hope to arouse the attention of young children on eye care, and encourage them to share their love and support to the visually impaired children in developing countries.”

In addition to AXA Hong Kong, Orbis is also thankful for the kind support of Sunday Kiss, Yellow Bus, Orbis volunteer ophthalmologist Dr. Flora Lau, Maryknoll Convent School (Primary Section), Chun Tien Hua Hua Foundation and The Young Communication of Hong Kong Baptist University. For full details of this year’s blindfold lunch, please visit www.orbis.org/hkblindfold.

About Orbis International

Orbis International is a nonprofit humanitarian organization that works in developing countries to save sight worldwide. Orbis prevents and treats blindness through hands-on training, public health education, improved access to quality eye care, and partnerships with local health care organizations in an effort to eliminate avoidable blindness. To learn more about Orbis, please visit www.orbis.org.

About AXA Hong Kong

AXA Hong Kong, a member of the AXA Group, prides itself of serving over 1 million customers¹ in Hong Kong and Macau. Besides being one of the largest health protection providers in Hong Kong, it is also the number 1 General Insurance provider² and a market leader in motor insurance.

AXA Hong Kong is committed to helping its customers achieve stability and prosperity through providing a comprehensive range of life, health, property and casualty protection, as well as wealth management and retirement solutions.

We believe it is our inherent responsibility to support the communities we operate in, hence creating a sustainable business via constant and considerable contribution in the dimensions of health, environment and the community.

¹ Including customers of AXA China Region Insurance Company Limited, AXA China Region Trustees Limited and AXA China Region Insurance Company (Bermuda) Limited (incorporated in Bermuda with limited liability)

² Based on 2013 Office of the Commissioner of Insurance market share statistics

Caption



This is the fourth successive year Orbis has held the Blindfold Lunch event with AXA Hong Kong. As always, the ultimate aim is to educate school kids about the importance of sight protection through eye-care talks and a hands-on blindfold experience.



Ms. Mary Lau, Director of Development, Orbis China and Hong, encouraged students to show their concern for the visually impaired around the world.



Ms. Andrea Wong, Chief Corporate Responsibility Officer, AXA Hong Kong, encouraged students to cherish their invaluable vision.



Dr. Flora Lau, Orbis Volunteer Ophthalmologist, clarified common misconceptions about myopia and shared useful eye care tips with students.



All guests came on to the stage and encouraged students to protect their eyesight.



Students paid attention on the sharing by guests.



Students are happy to join Orbis Blindfold Lunch.