



PROGRESS REPORT

October 2025

Victoria Cohen
EYE CANCER CHARITABLE TRUST

Saving lives, eyes and vision
through education

Introduction

The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust is entered on the register of charities in England and Wales, registered charity number 1194105. Details regarding the charity are available at the Charity Commission website <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5179342/charity-overview> or at www.vcecct.org.

The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust was set up in memory of Vicky Cohen (1970-2020), Director of the Ocular Oncology Department at Moorfields Eye Hospital, London, UK, and President of the International Society of Ocular Oncology (ISOO).

We are a small charity with modest goals. Any support we receive makes a big difference. The main aims of the charity are to raise awareness of eye cancer and the

global need for more doctors, and to support aspiring ocular oncologists with the cost of their fellowship.

Training to become an eye specialist takes many years but not everyone who has the ambition or ability has the means to support themselves through their education.

Each year, the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust awards a scholarship to an aspiring ocular oncologist, chosen by our expert panel, to support them through their fellowship. The value of this award is currently \$40,000 USD, or equivalent.

There are not enough ocular oncologists in the world. The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust identifies and supports the Vicky Cohens of tomorrow, individuals who will go on to save the lives, eyes, and vision of countless people affected by eye cancer.

Update from Nicholas Rapley

Chair of the VCECCT



The last year has been another busy and successful chapter for the charity. The highlight is always the selection of the Victoria Cohen Scholar, and the Judging Panel was very excited by their choice of Dr. Kalpita Das from India who, thanks to the support of the charity, is now on her fellowship at the Wills Eye Hospital, Philadelphia, under the mentorship of Dr. Carol Shields.

The decision to give the \$40,000 award to Dr. Das was not an easy one, she faced stiff competition from fourteen other applicants, especially Dr. Leke Folaranmi from Nigeria, who is trying to pursue a career as an ocular ophthalmologist. Ultimately the Judging Panel decided to create a new award for ocular ophthalmology for a further \$20,000 and awarded this to Dr. Folaranmi so he could pursue his training at the Houston Methodist Hospital, Texas.

Unfortunately, politics then got in the way. Like Dr. Sediqi from Afghanistan, a previous winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship, Dr. Folaranmi has been denied access to the USA and is currently trying to find another Centre of Excellence where he can complete his training.

As Chair of a charity which is trying to help people to become eye surgeons such decisions are extremely frustrating. There are simply not enough ocular oncologists in the world, especially in low-income countries, and the doctors we support would go on to save the lives, eyes, and vision of countless people if they were given the chance to complete their training. The charity stands ready to support Dr. Folaranmi and Dr. Sediqi as and when they can resolve their issues with visas.

Our goals as a charity remain modest. We are a small organisation that exists to raise awareness of eye cancer and the need for more ocular oncologists around the world. We are very proud of our success in helping aspiring eye cancer specialists to complete their fellowships. Training to become an ocular oncologist takes many years and not all of those with the ability or ambition have the means.

The support of our wonderful Ambassadors, our Judging Panel, our Trustees, our marketing agency, 2112 Communications Ltd, and all our supporters and donors is hugely appreciated. Together we are helping countless people affected by eye cancer. Thank you.

Progress update from Dr. Vijitha Vempuluru

Winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship 2022



Reflecting on another remarkable year in ocular oncology, I am pleased to share the progress made in my clinical practice and research at the LV

Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad, India. My role as a Consultant Ophthalmologist and Ocular Oncologist continues to evolve as I integrate new knowledge, collaborate with global leaders, and contribute to impactful research.

Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to care for numerous patients with complex ocular tumors, including retinoblastoma, uveal melanoma, sebaceous carcinoma, ocular surface squamous neoplasia, and rhabdomyosarcoma, and many rare ocular malignancies. Leveraging my training from Wills Eye Hospital and LVPEI, I continue to tailor advanced, multidisciplinary treatment plans with support from colleagues from multiple disciplines of oncology. Together, we aim to raise the bar for ocular oncology care in India.

One of the most fulfilling aspects of 2025 has been my active involvement in research and academic publishing, which has helped push the frontiers of ocular oncology. This year, I have co-authored and led 28 peer-reviewed publications spanning topics such as:

- Lag time and treatment delays in retinoblastoma and their long-term impact
- High-dose intravitreal topotecan for recurrent intraocular retinoblastoma
- Artificial Intelligence in ocular oncology with the ArMOR model
- Comparative studies on intravitreal melphalan vs topotecan for vitreous seeds in retinoblastoma
- A global study on race-based outcomes in retinoblastoma

These publications reflect our commitment to expanding the global understanding of ocular cancers and rare tumors affecting the orbit and adnexa.

This year also marked meaningful academic milestones. I contributed to awareness and education through lectures at national and international meetings such as the International Society of Ocular Oncology conference 2024, Collaborative Community on Ophthalmic Imaging, meeting 2025, All India Ophthalmological Society - Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology Meet 2025, Hyderabad Ophthalmologists Association VISTA 2025, and Asia Pacific Society of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus Congress, 2025.

As a commitment to carry forward educational programs, I delivered a talk on ocular oncology at “3H” – the flagship post-graduate education program by the LV Prasad Eye Institute. I orchestrated and organized EyeCAN 2025, a flagship biennial CME of LV Prasad Eye Institute focused on ocular oncology. The meeting, which featured national and international speakers sharing their expertise, was an immense success.

Beyond academia, I have remained closely engaged in community awareness. In 2025, I actively participated in Retinoblastoma Awareness Week, supporting campaigns on early detection and parental education. I also took part in Whitathon, a charity fundraiser aimed at raising awareness about retinoblastoma in the community.

As I look back on 2025, I remain incredibly grateful to the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust for the enduring support and belief in my journey. The fellowship laid a strong foundation, and I am committed to honoring it by continuing to innovate, educate, and advocate for better ocular cancer care, especially in resource-limited settings.

The future of ocular oncology holds both challenges and promise. With each patient, publication, and partnership, I am reminded of our collective responsibility to push the boundaries of what is possible. I look forward to continuing this mission with renewed dedication in the years to come.

Update from Dr. Chika Amobi

Winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship 2023



It has been about four months since I returned to Nigeria after completing my fellowship in ocular oncology at Wills Eye Hospital, Philadelphia, an opportunity made possible through the generous support of the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust (VCECCT).

The fellowship was an experience that enhanced my clinical and surgical expertise, enabling me to deliver more effective and informed care to patients with ocular and orbital tumors in Nigeria.

Since my return, I have resumed work as an ocular oncologist at my institution, where I have managed a few eye cancer cases with my colleagues at my institution. I have also received referrals of ocular and orbital tumors from other centers. Although I currently face some limitations in terms of equipment and resources, I continue to make the most of what is available to deliver the best possible care to patients.

I remain closely connected with the Wills Eye Ocular Oncology fellowship community, whose members continue to provide guidance and valuable insights

when I encounter challenging cases. I also receive clinical photographs and imaging from colleagues at various hospitals seeking my input, reflecting the growing recognition of ocular oncology as a subspecialty and the trust that the fellowship experience has helped build.

One of my goals is to expand training and knowledge sharing among ophthalmologists in Nigeria. In the nearest future, I plan to conduct some teaching sessions to help colleagues recognize and strengthen their understanding particularly in the early diagnosis and management of retinoblastoma and other eye tumors.

Through these clinical activities, collaborations, and upcoming teaching initiatives, the impact of the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust Fellowship continues to extend beyond me, reaching patients, colleagues, and communities across Nigeria. I remain deeply grateful for this life-changing opportunity and for the VCECCT commitment to developing specialists who can make a lasting difference in regions where expert eye cancer care is most needed.

Progress update from Dr. Douglas Chigane

Winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship 2024



I'm back in Brazil, and I'm now living in Muriaé, a city in the state of Minas Gerais. We have a public oncology hospital here called Fundação Cristiano Varela, which is a reference center for oncology in a large region of the state — covering around 200 cities. I've had some conversations with the leadership there, and I'm currently exploring the possibility of starting an ocular oncology clinic at the hospital.

In the meantime, I'm also working at a private clinic in Muriaé as an ocular oncologist. Besides that, I'm working in Juiz de Fora — a larger city in the same

region — where I see patients at a private clinic. I am also launching an ocular oncology clinic at a public facility called Associação dos Cegos. It's a non-profit organization dedicated to helping underserved individuals and promoting the inclusion of blind people back into society.

Once again, I want to thank the VCECCT for believing in my potential and for supporting me during my training with Dr. Jesse Berry, which was truly a turning point in my career.

Progress update from Dr. Kalpita Das

Winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship 2025



Four months into my ocular oncology fellowship at Wills Eye Hospital, this journey has been deeply inspiring and transformative. Coming from India, training under the mentorship of world-renowned Dr. Carol Shields is truly a dream come true, and I am sincerely grateful to the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust for making this possible.

The fellowship has been an intense and stimulating environment, with enormous exposure to complex clinical cases and the chance to actively participate in their diagnosis and management. Beyond patient care, I have had the privilege of participating in research projects, academic activities, clinical case presentations, tumor boards, and teaching medical

students — experiences that continue to broaden my perspective and deepen my knowledge. Each day has been a learning experience, challenging me to grow as both a clinician and a researcher.

This fellowship marks a major transition in my career and I remain committed to further refine my skills, enhance my clinical and academic abilities, and carry these lessons back to India to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who need it most. I also wish to contribute meaningfully to the advances in ocular oncology with my skills I am learning from this fellowship.

Thank you once again to VCECCT for extending support in my journey and believing in my potential.

Progress update from Dr. Mansoor Sadiqi

Winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship 2024



Dr. Mansoor Sadiqi was the original winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship 2024 yet geopolitical issues have meant that he has been unable to obtain the necessary visas required to pursue his fellowship. The VCECCT remains committed to supporting his training to become an ocular oncologist as and when he can secure a fellowship at a recognised Centre of Excellence along with the necessary visas.

Here he provides an update on his situation:

It made me happy to hear that candidates from India and Africa have finished their fellowships—such great news. At the same time, I've been feeling a bit discouraged about my own progress. The situation in

Afghanistan makes it very hard to move forward with my long-term goals, and the way our country is seen globally adds to the frustration.

Still, I'm trying to stay hopeful. I applied to the vitreoretina fellowship as ocular oncology and retinoblastoma were also part of this fellowship under Tehran Medical University in Iran, and things were going well until the recent conflict in the Middle East.

Right now, I'm applying for the Retinoblastoma Fellowship at the University of Toronto and I'm doing my best to make it happen. I hope to have more positive news in my next update.

Thanks again for your support—it really means a lot.

Updates from the Ambassadors

Georgia Hall Australasia



This year has been an important and productive period in my role as an Ambassador for the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust. It has provided the opportunity to contribute to meaningful advocacy efforts that aim to improve outcomes for individuals affected by uveal melanoma.

A significant focus of my work has been on the accessibility of tebentafusp for patients with advanced uveal melanoma. I have engaged with policymakers by writing to local Members of Parliament to underline the importance of timely access to this treatment. In parallel, I initiated a petition advocating for changes to liver surveillance guidelines, recognising that earlier and more consistent monitoring is essential for improving patient care.

My own experience of being diagnosed with uveal melanoma at the age of 31 has been a profound challenge. But my involvement with the charity has enabled me to transform that difficult experience into a source of purpose and resilience.

Last year, I was proud to complete a 10km swim to raise funds for the charity. This experience reinforced how vital fundraising is in supporting the Trust's mission, and I will continue to look for opportunities to contribute through future events and initiatives.

Later this year, I will be contributing to the Australian Ocular Melanoma Alliance Summit, building on last year's reflections about coping with diagnosis. This year, I will focus on how adversity can be channelled into constructive and positive action.

The world urgently needs more ocular oncologists. These highly skilled specialists are essential to ensuring earlier diagnosis, timely treatment and improved long-term outcomes. The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust has a single, simple, but vital mission: to train talented aspiring ocular oncologists. I am honoured to contribute to this mission as an Ambassador.

Mohammad al Omari Middle East



I am proud to serve as an ambassador for the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust because my own journey has shown me how critical timely access to specialist care can be. When I was first diagnosed, I struggled to find an eye oncologist and faced delays that could have impacted both my vision and long-term health. With eye cancer, early detection and treatment are key – yet many patients, like myself, face barriers to receiving the right care at the right time.

Even today, I travel over seven hours twice a year just to access the specialized medical attention I need. While I am fortunate to manage this, I know that many others may not have the same means or opportunities. This is why I believe in the mission of the Trust: ensuring that people around the world can receive timely diagnosis, expert treatment, and the chance to protect their sight and their future.

By sharing my story, I hope to raise awareness and support for those who might otherwise go without the care they desperately need.



Howard Lloyd Europe

I was first diagnosed with a melanoma in my left eye in 2009.

16 years later, I sit here as a survivor of Ocular cancer with no recurrence and with my vision in the affected eye in pretty good condition. This is all down to the the knowledge, experience and expertise of Victoria Cohen not just in the treatment Victoria gave me, but also continuing on in the treatment that I receive from her protege.

During my follow ups, Victoria would often ask me if doctors she was mentoring could sit in on our consultations to observe my progress. Without hesitation I always allowed this as I realised the importance of mentoring in this niche and specialised field of medicine.

Updates from the Ambassadors (continued)

And when it came to innovation in Ocular oncology, I also without hesitation participated in trials of certain medicines that Victoria was investigating to improve vision and limit the effects of radiation damage to the eye. All were successful.

So when I was asked to become an Ambassador to VCECCT, I felt privileged to play a small part in honouring not just the life and work of Victoria Cohen, but to see the legacy of her life's work continue on in the aspiring Ocular Oncologists of tomorrow. And especially to see the opportunity created for those practitioners who might never have had the chance to study ocular oncology, and in turn save the lives and eyesight of those who they treat.



John Bird
United Kingdom

Now in my eighties I was diagnosed with a malignant eye tumour in 2003. This was spotted at a routine eye test at Boots

Opticians in Guildford prior to which I had no idea a problem existed. Thanks to some marvelous surgery at Moorfields Hospital I am still enjoying a normal, full life being eternally grateful to all those wonderful consultants that looked after me including Victoria Cohen. Regular eye examinations continue and although my left eye vision isn't brilliant, I have 20/20 vision overall. I am very proud to be an Ambassador for the VCECCT. I compile pub quizzes which afford a platform for me to expand on the charity work, and which also contribute goodly sums of money to this very worthwhile cause.

Abby Vidler
United Kingdom

When I first found out that Victoria Cohen had passed away, I also discovered the VCECCT charity so I immediately contacted Nick to see if I could be a part of this charity. Victoria was



one of the amazing surgeons who saved my life and although I was too young to realise what she had done for me, I never got the chance to thank her in person, I hope that being one of the UK Ambassadors and supporting the VCECCT is the next best thing! We need more ocular oncologists in the world, and our charity offers monetary awards to help aspiring ocular oncologists to complete their fellowships, whilst raising awareness for all eye cancers!

Tessa Parry-Wingfield
United Kingdom



From shock diagnosis of ocular melanoma in March 2023 to now has been an extraordinary whirlwind. Lifechanging lows, but also, some unexpected highs along the way. A prominent one being Nick Rapley reaching out, introducing me to the VCECCT – and all its extraordinary work - and subsequently being asked to be an Ambassador.

I'd never heard of an ocular oncologist until I was urged to see one following some alarming tests showing an ominous shadow instead of a healthy eyeball; just two weeks later he performed enucleation – removal of my left eye. His deft skills saved my life.

Ocular melanoma may be rare. But ocular oncologists are extremely few and far between; some countries simply don't have any. I thank my lucky stars every day that I live somewhere with access to niche expert healthcare like this. Without it, I wouldn't have seen my daughters grow up.

Who knows what the future holds. But I am humbled by the VCECCT's work – investing in the training and education of ocular oncologists in places across the world where there are none. A small but incredibly mighty charity, I am honoured to be an Ambassador. I'll continue to bang the drum and raise what I can to go towards changing the eyes, lives and vision of those in need of these specialist skills. Next fundraising stop for me: climbing Kilimanjaro."

A new award for Ophthalmic Pathologists

The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust's main purpose is to support aspiring ocular oncologists.

This year, however, the Judging Panel decided to introduce a second award to support an individual training in Ophthalmic Pathology. The winner of this discretionary award for \$20,000 USD was Dr. Olaleke Folaranmi from Nigeria.

Dr. Folaranmi commented, 'It's a privilege and great honour to receive the 2025 Victoria Cohen Award for Ophthalmic Pathology. This is a remarkable milestone in my career, this opportunity allows me to focus on a critical need: improving the study and diagnosis of ocular tumors, especially retinoblastoma, a common childhood cancer in Nigeria. As a general surgical pathologist, this award provides access to advanced training and mentorship in ocular pathology, equipping me with the skills to make a real difference for patients in my country.'

Nicholas Rapley, Chair of the VCECCT added, 'We had not anticipated creating an additional award for Ophthalmic Pathology, however, the Judging Panel felt that Dr. Folaranmi's case was so convincing that we wanted to support him. There is a huge need for more expertise in Nigeria and we are confident Dr. Folaranmi will make a significant difference to those affected by eye cancer once he has completed his training. Our charity remains committed to supporting aspiring ocular oncologists and we are delighted we have the flexibility to support Dr. Folaranmi as well as the winner of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship. I am grateful to all our supporters.'

Unfortunately, however, Dr. Folaranmi has experienced similar problems to Dr. Sediqi as far as obtaining the necessary visas required to work abroad and has not, as yet, begun his fellowship. These unexpected problems are frustrating for all concerned, however, the charity remains ready to support Dr. Folaranmi as and when he is able to continue his training. We hope to have more positive news regarding his career in due course.



Travel Grants

Judging Panel

Attending and networking at relevant conferences is an important part of any ocular oncologists education, as such the charity is pleased to offer Victoria Cohen Travel Grants for those in need of support with the cost of travel and attendance.

The main conferences we support include those organised by the International Society of Ocular Oncology (India, Kenya, Brazil), the Ocular Oncology Group (Sweden) and Ocular Oncology Day (Italy).

The value of our Travel Grants is normally between \$500 to \$1,000, or equivalent currency. Travel Grants are offered to delegates in need of financial assistance, as determined by the event organisers.



The Judging Panel

The decision regarding who wins the Victoria Cohen Scholarship rests entirely with the Judging Panel, which is made up of six leading ocular oncologists from around the world.

Details of the Judges and their bios can be found here: <https://www.vcecct.org/about-us/>

Each year the Judges look for the aspiring ocular oncologist with a combination of the greatest potential and the greatest need. Applicants must demonstrate both talent and passion for ocular oncology, and the need for financial support through their fellowship. All applications are anonymised to ensure the integrity of the judging process.

Ambassadors

Eye cancer is a global disease, and our mission is to raise awareness of the charity and the need for more ocular oncologists around the world. To do this we are building a team of Ambassadors who are each responsible for their own region. Each of these Ambassadors is a survivor, they have all been affected by eye cancer, and are keen to give something back.

- Africa – vacant
- Asia - vacant
- Australasia – Georgia Hall
- Europe – Howard Lloyd
- Middle East – Mohammad al Omari
- North America – vacant
- South America – vacant
- UK – John Bird,
Abby Vidler,
Tessa Parry-Wingfield,
Livi Deane

Details of our Ambassadors are available at www.vcecct.org/meet-our-ambassadors/

Trustees

The charity is grateful for the support of an experienced team of Trustees:

Tim Weller – Media Entrepreneur
Jamie Campbell-Harris – Chief Financial Officer
Matthew Searle – Lawyer
Nicholas Rapley – Chair

Details on the Trustees can be found at the Charity Commission website and on LinkedIn.

Fundraising

Since the charity was established, fundraising has come from a variety of foundations, businesses, and individuals. In the last year the charity has benefitted from sponsored runs, swims, pub quizzes and curry-bingo nights. We are grateful to all those who raise funds for the charity through their own efforts, whatever they may be.

As a small charity, any support makes a big difference. You can see exactly where your money goes and follow the careers of the Victoria Cohen Scholars. Please help us to support more aspiring ocular oncologists.

Get in the
Christmas spirit
at the
*Dickensian
Christmas
Carol Concert*

There are numerous ways to support the charity, details can be found at www.vcecct.org/support-us

The charity's now firmly established and increasingly popular biannual event, 'A Dickensian Christmas Carol Service', returns to the Priory Church of St Bartholomew the Great, London, UK, on 1st December 2026.

This is a magical event which gets everyone in a festive mood whilst raising awareness of eye cancer and the need for more ocular oncologists.

Tickets are available here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-dickensian-christmas-carol-concert-tickets-1975038777149?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=ebdsshcopyurl>

*Please
join us!*



Marketing and Communications



2112 Communications (www.2112comms.com)

We are very fortunate to have the support of 2112 Communications, a leading marketing and design agency, which has developed the brand image of the charity, especially online and on social media, and helps with all external communications. The charity is especially grateful to Siobhan Brunton and her team.



A Cure in Sight (www.acureinsight.org)

A Cure in Sight is a US-based charity which supports families who have ocular melanoma and focuses on research for a cure. ACIS regularly shares content with us and actively helps with our social media strategy. We are especially grateful to Melody Burchett and Danet Peterson for their help.



The Power of Words (www.thepowerofwords.co.uk)

TPW provides connected communications to corporate clients. Tessa Parry-Wingfield, Founder, is an experienced former journalist and marketing professional. Tessa creates content for the Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust through interviews with those affected by eye cancer, or those connected with our charity in some way. We use this content on social media to raise awareness of eye cancer and the need for more ocular oncologists.

Supporters

As the charity evolves, our network of Supporters grows. The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust now enjoys beneficial reciprocal relationship with the following organisations:



Looking ahead

The Victoria Cohen Eye Cancer Charitable Trust is four years old and has made four awards so far for ocular oncology.

The Trustees and the Judges have agreed that the charity will continue to offer just one Victoria Cohen Scholarship for aspiring ocular oncologists per annum, whilst retaining the flexibility to support related fields like ocular ophthalmology. This keeps the award exclusive, meaningful, and much sought-after by aspiring ocular oncologists. The value of the Scholarship is now \$40,000. The value of the scholarship is potentially life-changing, making a fellowship at a Centre of Excellence a possibility when otherwise unaffordable.

We are still young as an organisation. Our short-term goals are to raise awareness of eye cancer, the need for more ocular oncologists around the world, the work of the charity, and the existence of the Victoria Cohen Scholarship for aspiring ocular oncologists.

This is our focus. In the short term, we believe the best way we can help those affected by eye cancer is to continue supporting aspiring ocular oncologists with the cost of their fellowship. These are the Vicky Cohens of tomorrow, individuals who will save the lives, eyes, and vision of countless people affected by eye cancer.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our donors. Thank you for your kindness.

<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/17531#!/DonationDetails>

Victoria Cohen Scholarship

In memory of Victoria Cohen 1970-2020

