



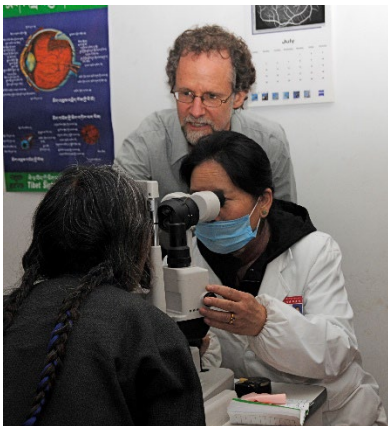
BC's Dr. Martin Spencer is awarded the prestigious 2024 American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) Foundation Chang-Crandall Humanitarian Award

VANCOUVER, BC – April 5, 2024 – British Columbia's Dr. Martin (Marty) Spencer is being presented with the prestigious ASCRS Foundation Chang-Crandall Humanitarian award that honours individuals around the world who demonstrate exemplary dedication to humanitarian efforts with a focus on addressing cataract blindness and disability. The award includes a \$100,000 USD cash prize that Dr. Spencer has earmarked for Vancouver-based eye care charity Seva Canada whose board he co-chairs and their US sister organization Seva Foundation.

43 million people worldwide are living with blindness, 80% of which can be treated or prevented. Dr. Marty Spencer, based on Vancouver Island, has devoted much of his life to ensuring there are trained eye care professionals in low-income countries that can provide their own communities with high-quality eye care today and in the future.

Few people are more revered by eye care providers, particularly ophthalmologists in Asia and Africa, than Marty. His work epitomises international development with dignity, where Dr. Spencer's success is measured by their success and the growth of their dignity as professionals, long after he has gone home. "I measure my success, not by the number of surgeries that I do, but the number of surgeries being done after I leave." – Dr. Marty Spencer

"I am deeply honoured and humbled to receive the ASCRS Foundation Chang-Crandall Humanitarian Award. This recognition not only symbolizes the collective efforts of those committed to eradicating cataract blindness and disability, but underscores the importance of sustained, impactful humanitarian service. I share this honour with the dedicated teams at Seva Canada and Seva Foundation, whose collaborative spirit propels our shared mission forward. Together, we will continue to make strides in restoring sight and improving countless lives around the world," said Dr. Marty Spencer.



Dr. Spencer training in the Tibetan areas of China

For almost 40 years, Marty has travelled to India, Nepal, the Tibetan Areas of China, Madagascar, Malawi, Cambodia, and Guatemala to train local ophthalmologists on surgical techniques, often at his own expense. He's also designed several instruments for cataract surgery making it more efficient and streamlined for low-income settings, as well as two intraocular lenses (artificial lens implant used in cataract surgery). Marty has also published and lectured extensively on topics related to cataract surgery, particularly in low-income countries. He also developed an innovative surgical technique (manual sutureless cataract surgery) which became a global standard technique for decades.

"In the early 1980s, when the eye care community in most high-income countries argued that the new transformative, intraocular lens techniques were too expensive for most people in India, Marty ignored their advice, got on a plane, loaded it with equipment and became legendary as one of the first Western

ophthalmologists to go to India to train in-country ophthalmic professionals in the use of current techniques,” said Dr. Ken Bassett, Seva Canada’s program director.

In the 1990s Marty was a key player in the creation of Aravind Eye Care System’s Aurolab, which is an Indian manufacturing facility that reduced the cost of intraocular lenses from over \$300 to less than \$3.



“My favorite story is from a long time ago from an eye camp that we trekked into in the foothills of Everest. There was a woman there that lived a 10 days walk away from the eye camp and she was blind in both eyes from cataracts. She had delivered her baby two years before but had never seen her son. Her husband led her on the 10-day walk to the eye camp where I operated on both her eyes. After her bandages were removed and she saw her son for the first time she said ‘you have given me divine eyes.’ I still get choked up thinking about it. I actually got a picture of her

with her hand on her child’s head. And there’ve been many stories like that – seeing the patients’ faces afterwards is unbelievable.” - Marty

His work has earned him recognition at home too. In 2016 Dr. Spencer was awarded the Governor General’s Sovereign Medal for Volunteers for his unwavering commitment to ensuring everyone — regardless of their income, location, gender or religion— has access to high-quality eye care.



Dr. Marty Spencer with trainees in Thori, Nepal

Marty’s work has been transformative to eye care programs worldwide and through them, transformative to so many people who are now able to see. He is the embodiment of ‘Seva’ or selfless service and an inspiration to us all.

Dr. Spencer will formally receive his award during the 2024 ASCRS Annual Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts, April 5 - 8, 2024, as part of its 50th anniversary celebration.

About Seva Canada:

[Seva Canada](#) is a Vancouver-based charitable organization whose mission is to restore sight and prevent blindness in low- and middle-income countries. Since 1982, Seva has given the power of sight to more than 5 million people through life-changing surgeries and has provided eye care services including glasses and medicine to millions more.

We work with local partners to create sustainable eye care programs that achieve long-term change, are culturally sensitive and reach those most in need - women, children and people living in extreme poverty and isolation.

We work in Benin, Burundi, Cambodia, Ethiopia, India, Madagascar, Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda.

Charity Intelligence named Seva Canada one of the [Top 100 Charities](#) for the 6th year in a row in 2023.

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