

National study reveals critical need for visual health solutions in China

Charenton-le-Pont, France (June 10, 2016) – On the occasion of National Eye Care Day in China, the release of a first-of-its-kind study, supported by Essilor, has provided a comprehensive outlook on the Chinese population’s visual health from an economic, public policy and medical perspective.

The results of the first domestic white paper on China’s National Vision Health, conducted by Prof. Li Ling, Head of the China Center for Health Development, were released at the National School of Development at Peking University, Beijing, just before China’s 21st National Eye Care Day on Monday June 6. According to the report, in 2012 close to 500 million people over the age of 5 had an uncorrected visual defect in China, among which 450 million had myopia, while the social and economic costs caused by visual defects accounted for 1.3% of China’s GDP (US\$103 bn). By 2020, nearly 700 million people are expected to have myopia in China – twice the population of the United States.

“On one hand, the number of youths with myopia in China is high, which can threaten the vision health of present and future generations and potentially negatively impact society, the economy and security of the country”, commented Prof. Li Ling. “On the other hand, patients are experiencing age-related visual defects at a much younger age, which can be a heavy burden to a society that is seeing significant growth in its elderly population.”

Supported by the philanthropic SSCL Foundation – Essilor Fund in China, and endorsed by the [Vision Impact Institute](#), the report develops a complete action framework for China and includes a call for government regulation to promote the sustainable development of the optical industry.

“When half a billion people in one country alone suffer unnecessarily from a public health issue, we believe we have a commitment at Essilor to do everything we can to improve awareness that simple solutions exist,” said Jayanth Bhuvanaraghan, Chief Mission Officer at Essilor International. “Over the past 3 years Essilor has been investing in strategic giving initiatives and inclusive business models in China to both raise awareness of the importance of healthy vision and to improve access to vision care for the millions of Chinese people living in underserved communities.”

Long term commitment to improve awareness and access to eye health in China

Reaching children most in need is one of the Group’s priorities given the importance of eyesight on learning and development. The Essilor Vision Foundation (EVF) in China has been managing two philanthropic partnerships with local organizations since early 2015 on behalf of the SSCL Foundation – Essilor Fund. These programs have already enabled over 200,000 school children from underprivileged families to be screened and over 10,000 children to be equipped with their first pair of eyeglasses.

The first program, Eye Do, launched in partnership with Aier, the largest chain eye hospital group in China, was awarded “The Best Charity Project of the Year 2015” at the China Charity Festival in Beijing in January of this year, while the second partnership with non-for-profit Education in Sight is enabling thousands more school children living in remote areas to benefit from free screenings and eyeglasses.

On Monday June 6 – National Eye Care Day -, volunteers from all three organizations teamed up across different primary schools in the provinces of Yunnan and Shanxi and screened over 800 children, providing 230 of them on the spot with the glasses they need to see clearly.

Elsewhere, in isolated rural villages across Yunnan and Gansu provinces, members of Essilor's 2.5 New Vision Generation (2.5 NVG) inclusive business division worked with local eye hospitals and Vision Ambassadors to organize special screening events. Over 1,200 people, mostly senior citizens, were screened and more than 200 of them equipped free of charge with reading glasses.

2.5 NVG is a global division created by Essilor in 2013 to develop and implement inclusive business models that help provide access to vision care for the 2.5 billion people in the world who do not have the vision correction they need. The division has been working with local hospitals in four Chinese provinces over the past 18 months to deploy its innovative Vision Ambassador program. This initiative aims to scale up vision care services in a sustainable way by training people from local rural communities to carry out basic vision screenings and to sell reading glasses. Thanks to this training, close to 200 Vision Ambassadors are currently supplementing their daily income through their sales of eyeglasses while contributing to the wellbeing and prosperity of their local communities.

About Essilor

The world's leading ophthalmic optics company, Essilor designs, manufactures and markets a wide range of lenses to improve and protect eyesight. Its mission is to improve lives by improving sight. To support this mission, Essilor allocates more than €200 million to research and innovation every year, in a commitment to continuously bring new, more effective products to market. Its flagship brands are Varilux®, Crizal®, Transitions®, Eyezen™, Xperio®, Optifog®, Foster Grant®, Bolon™ and Costa®. It also develops and markets equipment, instruments and services for eyecare professionals.

Essilor reported consolidated revenue of more than €6.7 billion in 2015 and employs 61,000 people worldwide. It markets its products in more than 100 countries and has 32 plants, 490 prescription laboratories and edging facilities, as well as five research and development centers around the world. For more information, please visit www.essilor.com.

The Essilor share trades on the Euronext Paris market and is included in the Euro Stoxx 50 and CAC 40 indices.

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