

Research Report

INCREASING YOUNG MEMBERS' AWARENESS OF ST JOHN'S OPHTHALMIC ACTIVITIES

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Summary

The St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (the Hospital) has been in existence since 1882 and is now the *only* charitable provider of eye care in the Palestinian Territories. St John Ambulance Australia has supported the Hospital in a number of ways, and continues to support the Hospital in the current climate, in particular through the introduction of Ophthalmic Week in 2011, an initiative that aims to increase awareness of the work of the Hospital.

The research sought to examine members' awareness of both the Ophthalmic Week initiative and the work of the Hospital, and to determine ways to increase the same in the St John membership. The authors found that ophthalmic activities do and should continue to play a significant role in the work of St John Ambulance Australia, however there is much room for improvement in generating awareness of the initiatives and the work of the hospital amongst members. For young members, a particular focus on social media is imperative if this audience is to be reached.

As a result, several recommendations are made.

1. Development of a new Hospital video that depicts St John Ambulance Australia's role in supporting the Hospital, and that would better engage a modern and younger audience.
2. Increase Ophthalmic Week to Ophthalmic Month, giving divisions more flexibility to engage in varied ophthalmic activities over a longer period.
3. Develop a specific guide for divisions that includes the expectations, ideas and resources for Ophthalmic Week.
4. Develop novel and innovative centralised fundraising drives for the Hospital, internally and externally.
5. Increase promotion and communication of the Hospital and Ophthalmic Week through existing channels, but particularly through social media.

Introduction

The St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital

The St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (the Hospital) has been in existence since 1882 and is now the *only* charitable provider of eye care in the Palestinian Territories. The Hospital also maintains satellite eye care clinics and Mobile Outreach Clinics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Patients receive care regardless of ethnicity, religion or ability to pay, in line with the ethos of the St John organisation.

The decision to create the hospital was based on widespread eye disease and its far reaching consequences. The rate of blindness in Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem is ten times higher than in the Western world, with 80% of this blindness preventable and/or curable. With 78% of the Palestinian population in Jerusalem living below the poverty line, and 80% of Palestinians in the area dependant on food aid, there is a heavy reliance on charitable funds to ensure medical treatment.

Strong evidence suggests that blindness causes poverty (<http://www.hollows.org.au/news-media/study-confirms-blindness-causes-poverty>). By restoring sight, poverty can be alleviated by improving the economic circumstances for individuals and families, which benefits whole communities. Specifically, sight restoration allows participation in work and education which improves economic conditions.

In 2013, the Hospital saw over 114,000 patients, supporting the World Health Organisation's common agenda for global action, *Blindness: 2020 Vision. The Global Initiative for the Elimination of Avoidable Blindness*. The Hospital relies heavily on charitable donations and funding, and has had difficulty in recent years retaining funding for its programs. If funding is not secured for the mobile outreach clinic (an eye health service that ensures access to members of the Palestinian Territories living in remote and difficult-to-access locations due to conflict in the region), the program may cease and these essential services will no longer be available to many Palestinians.

St John Ambulance Australia and the Eye Hospital

St John Ambulance Australia has supported the Hospital in a number of ways, and continues to support the Hospital in the current climate, in particular through the introduction of Ophthalmic Week in 2011 by the National Office.

The Ophthalmic Week project aimed to increase member awareness of the activities and impact of the Hospital, and carry out fundraising for the Hospital. Resources were produced and supplied nationally to St John entities to assist in this awareness-raising exercise.

In subsequent years, the feedback received on the Ophthalmic Week project was that states and territories and their volunteers were happy to continue to promote awareness of the ophthalmic projects, however there was little interest in either fundraising from their own members (who already give time and effort to the organisation), or in

participating in fundraising activities within the broader community. Other reasons cited for disinterest in fundraising include the lack of resources to promote the projects outside of St John, and the lack of service hours' acknowledgement for participating in such presentations.

To date, the AYAT have been informed that fundraising activities by states and territories have included dinners, raffles, morning teas and presentations at external organisations such as Rotary Clubs.

At the 2014 March meeting of the (then) St John Australian Youth Council (AYC), Amanda Power, National Office staff member responsible for coordinating Ophthalmic projects nationally (including Ophthalmic Week), presented on the work of the Hospital. She also requested the AYAT's assistance in identifying ways to better promote Ophthalmic Week, including how to better engage the membership with the work of the Hospital. In response to this presentation, the AYAT proposed to design and implement a research project looking at how we can increase awareness of and engagement with ophthalmic projects among young members aged 12–26 years.

Method

Aim

To determine how St John might better engage young members in the work of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem (the Hospital), and raise the profile of Ophthalmic Week.

Objectives

To determine:

1. the levels of awareness and participation of young members in:
 - a) the organisation's annual Ophthalmic Week activities
 - b) the work of the Hospital
2. how St John might encourage young members to:
 - a) engage with the work of the Hospital
 - b) increase participation in Ophthalmic Week activities.

Strategies

National survey

The AYC developed a survey, using SurveyMonkey, to conduct this research. The survey was promoted through current St John social media and email networks. Questions covered several broad themes, including:

- establishing the current awareness of Ophthalmic Week and the Hospital among young members
- determining if young members are interested in engaging with ophthalmic activities, both those currently undertaken and future initiatives
- looking at filtration levels and use of current age-specific Ophthalmic Week resources (developed by the National Office) to young members, and how better to use and distribute these resources
- potential ideas for the development of new resources for both internal and external promotion activities
- potential ideas for increasing fundraising opportunities both internally and externally
- potential ideas for the improved engagement of members with the work of the Hospital.

National Focus Group

After the completion of this research, the AYC conducted a focus group activity with young St John members from across the country. Using data from the survey, members were asked to pick a specific idea to increase either fundraising or awareness of Ophthalmic Week and the Hospital, and flesh out a detailed plan of how this could be practically achieved in the future.

Target audience

The target audience for the survey was young members (12–26 years) and leaders involved in the management of young members.

Results

National survey

Survey demographics

A total of **103 participants** completed whole or part of the survey which was conducted to investigate the awareness of Ophthalmic Week amongst St John members across Australia.

Members came from a variety of levels in St John, though most had a role in a local division (78.3%) (Fig. 1). The majority of participants were aged between 18–24 years (28.3%), followed by 12–17 years (21.7%). All age brackets, apart from >75 years, had some level of representation (Fig. 2).

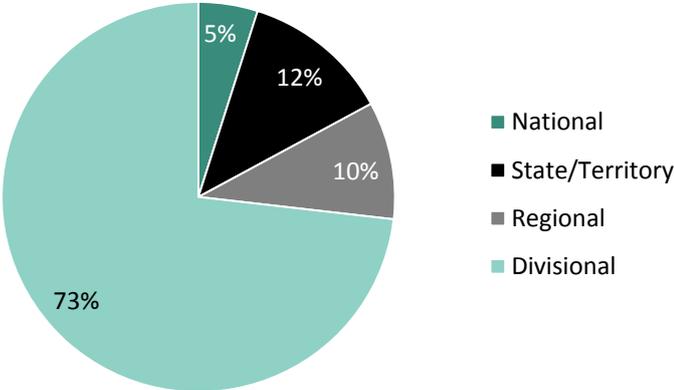


Figure 1. Participant representation in different levels of St John.

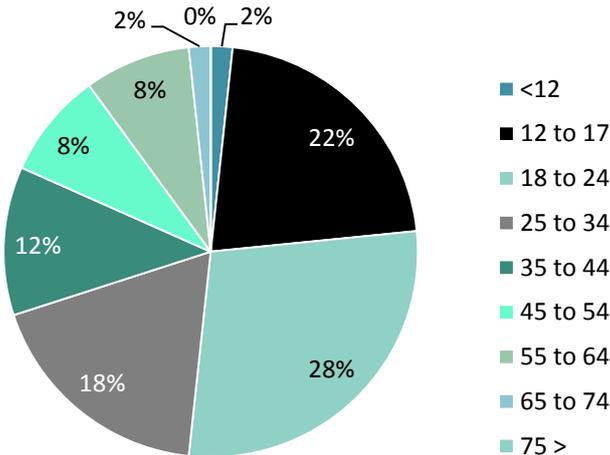


Figure 2. Participants by age cohort.

Basic knowledge

Respondents had mixed levels of awareness of Ophthalmic Week, with 58.6% of survey participants having heard of the initiative during their time in St John. However, 81.6% of respondent members were very aware of the Hospital itself. Of the people who knew of Ophthalmic Week, only 62.8% were aware of its link to the Hospital. Even fewer (18.6%) knew around what time of year the week was normally held (Fig. 3).

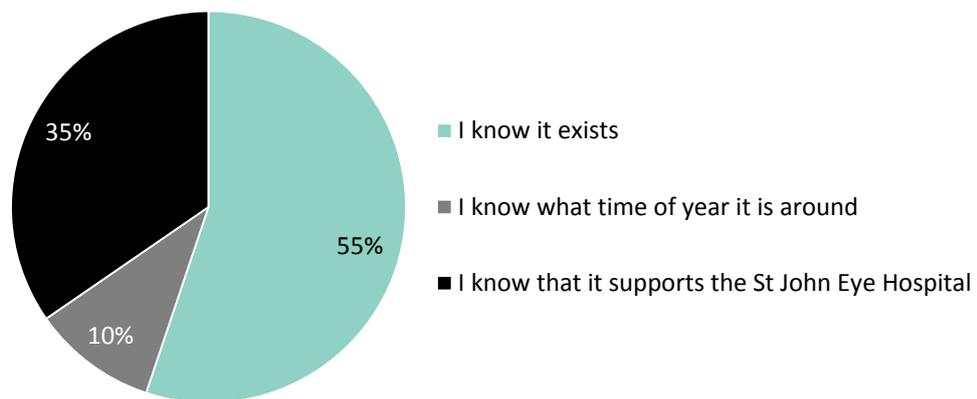


Figure 3. Respondent awareness of Ophthalmic Week.

Members who knew about Ophthalmic Week found out through a range of sources including:

- Online
- From their division
- St John Cadet Handbook
- St John Facebook pages
- Cadet Eye Care Badge
- Word of mouth
- NCO courses
- *Spotlite* and other newsletters
- Resources , e.g. the giant blow up eyeball

Knowledge of the work done by the Hospital varied. Of those who were aware of its existence, only 71.3% knew they treated eye conditions whilst even fewer (28.7%) were aware of the mobile outreach clinics which are run by the Hospital (Fig. 4).

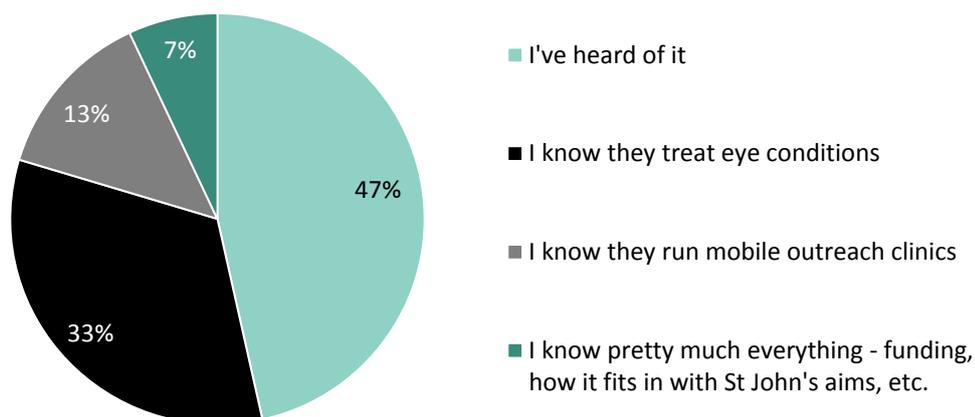


Figure 4. Respondent awareness of the Hospital.

Most respondents (97.0%) felt it was important for St John members to understand the role the organisation plays in supporting the Hospital. Survey respondents were then asked to watch a short eight minute clip on the work of the Hospital before being asked the same question again. There was little change in the response after watching the video, with 95.5%¹ of respondents still feeling it was important for members to understand the role St John Ambulance Australia plays in supporting the Hospital. For those who didn't feel it was important after watching the video, the two main reasons cited were, the lack of relevance of the Hospital to everyday first aid operations in Australia, and the video not being persuasive/modern/interesting enough.

St John Eye Hospital video

Only 10% of respondents had seen the St John Eye Hospital video, *Open Eyes*, (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUUIGAa8Vfl>) prior to this survey. After watching the video 100% of respondents who hadn't seen it before said they had learnt something new and useful about the Hospital.

Feedback on the video was mixed, with many respondents citing that it was very informative and provided lots of useful information. However, many also felt the video was old and not directly related to St John Ambulance Australia. A major suggestion was to make an updated modern video with Australian St John members featured, including perhaps young members.

¹ The decreased percentage is mainly due to some respondents leaving the survey at this point. There was an increase in one respondent who felt it was not important for members to understand the role of St John in supporting the hospital, after watching the video. The three respondents who initially felt this was the case continued to feel this way after watching the video.

St John Ophthalmic Week resources

40% of respondents had come across or seen the age specific resource packages developed by the St John National Office, with 15% having used these resources in some way (Fig. 5). Of those who have used the resources, most used them to run lessons or as part of the Cadet Eye Care Proficiency Badge (see Fig. 6). 93.3% of these respondents found the resources to be simple to use and self-explanatory; 86.7% felt the resources did not need to be changed in any way. Suggestions for changes included increasing the font size and including more activities.

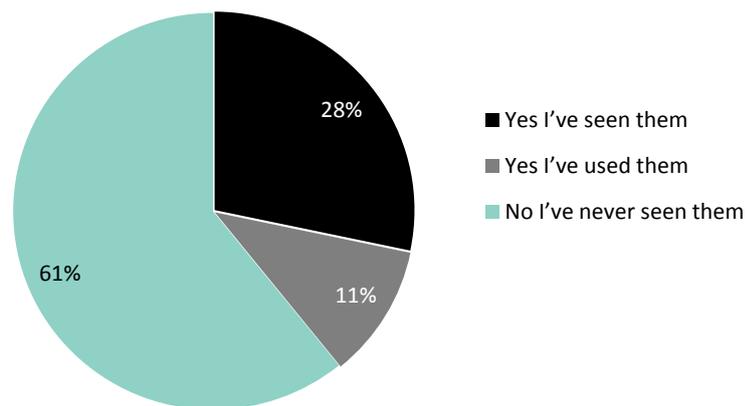


Figure 5. Respondent awareness of St John National Office Ophthalmic Week resources.

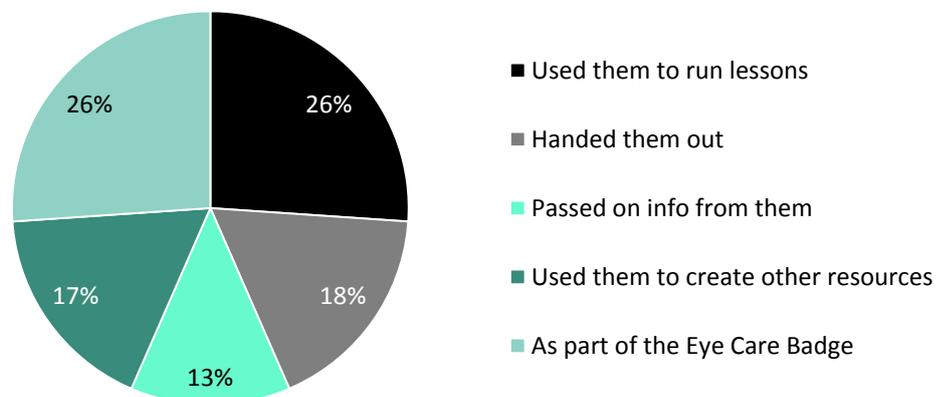


Figure 6. Respondent use of St John National Office Ophthalmic Week resources.

Members who had seen but not used the resources cited a range of reasons for not using them (Fig. 7). Responses in the other category included the inability to get to a division and being in roles where it wasn't necessary to use them. 66.7% of these members felt the resources do not need to be changed. Changes that were suggested include the

reduction of text and an increase in images and pictures, increasing font size and incorporating the resources with the Cadet Eye Care Proficiency Badge.

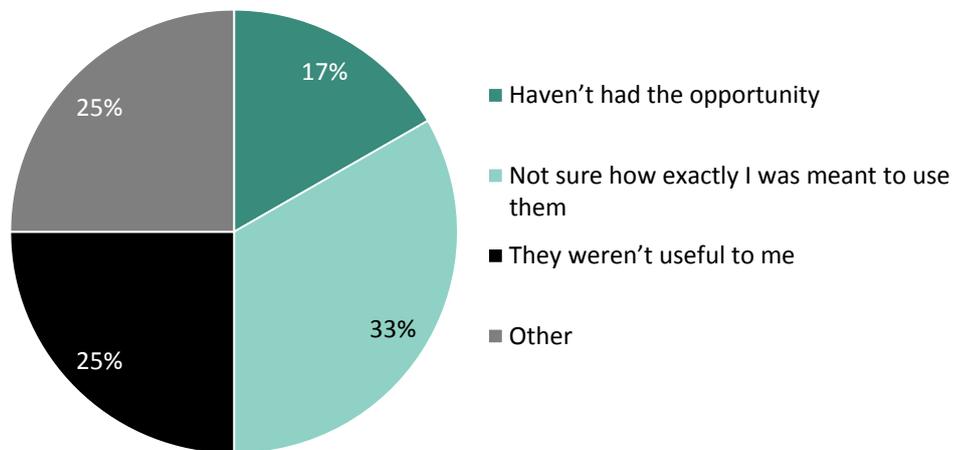


Figure. 7. Respondent reasons for not using the St John National Office Ophthalmic Week resources.

Overall 75% of all respondents thought that the resources were an effective way of communicating the work of the Hospital to members, 19.3% were unsure and 5.6% did not believe they were effective. Reasons for not being willing to use them include the lack of hard copies, and not being appropriate for the audience in the division.

Promoting awareness and fundraising for Ophthalmic Week

Most respondents (97.4%) felt that Ophthalmic Week is a worthwhile event for St John, because:

- it provides members with a focal point to raise awareness of the Hospital
- provides an opportunity to organise specific fund raising activities in the community and the organisation
- it highlights an area of healthcare that is interesting and different to everyday first aid
- members are given the potential to engage in an area they may not have previously investigated.

However, there were also a few shortcomings of using Ophthalmic Week as the primary way to raise awareness and funds for the Hospital, including:

- a specified week means that people forget about the Hospital for the rest of the year; it would be a more recognised cause if it was part of St John every day
- a division, for example, may spend one day or just a few hours of Ophthalmic Week to recognise the event. This may be a lot of resources engaged for small return, so 'what's the point'?

- lack of a specific goal for the week. If there was a national 'target' to be achieved, there may be more eagerness to engage in the week.
- Despite that the event has been running for a few years, there is little positive response and engagement in the week.

When asked whether they had ever gone to present about Ophthalmic Week to external community organisations such as Lyons or Rotary Clubs, most respondents (95%) said they had not. However, 82.5% of respondents said they would be willing to go and do so in the future. The main reasons cited for those who were not willing included that they gave enough time to St John already and that they wouldn't feel comfortable presenting on the topic (Fig. 9).

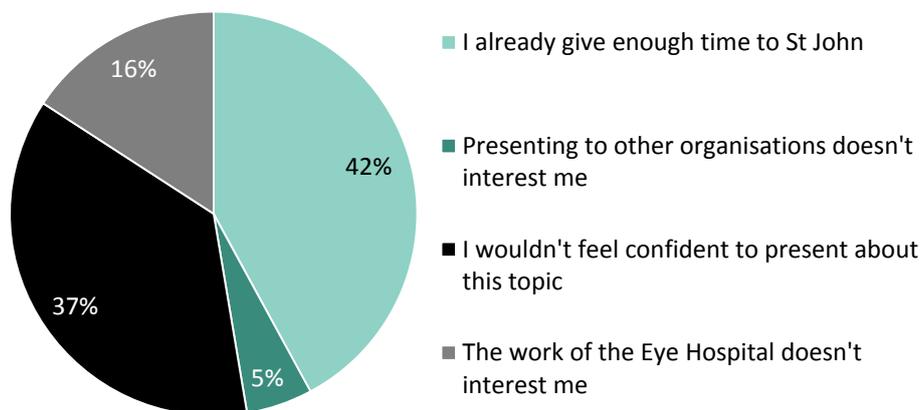


Figure 9. Reasons why respondents do not want to present information about Ophthalmic Week and the St John Eye Hospital to external community organisations in the future.

17.5% of respondents said they had participated in a fundraising activity for Ophthalmic Week in the past. Of those who hadn't fundraised, 79.7% said they would be willing to put time towards fundraising for the Hospital in the future. Main reasons for not wanting to fundraise were that respondents felt they already gave enough time to St John, and a lack of interest in fundraising activities (Fig. 10).

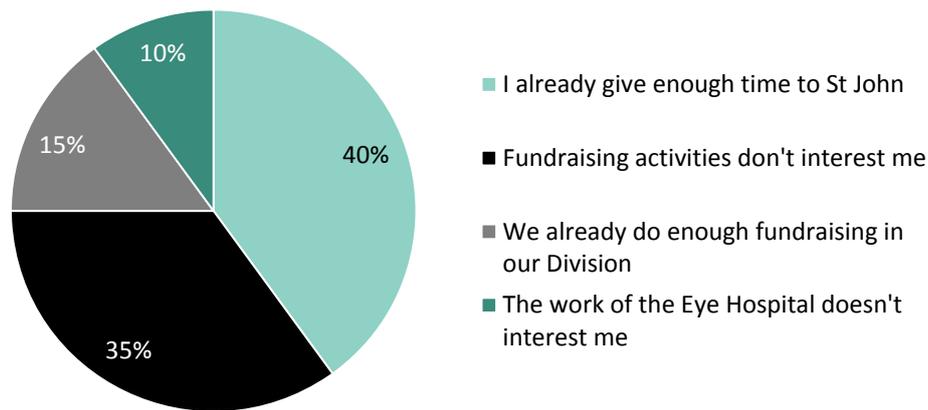


Figure 10. Reasons why respondents would not be willing to fundraise for the St John Eye Hospital in the future.⁸⁸

Moving forwards

Two questions asked of respondents consolidated a number of similar ideas:

The questions

1. Can you think of some ways in which we could better promote Ophthalmic Week or the work of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem to members?
2. Do you have any other ideas around how St John can engage members with the work of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem?

The responses

Both these questions incited a range of ideas which were similar and these are summarised below:

- Making the week **more hands on** and allowing members to get more involved:
 - joining forces with local ophthalmic centres to make the week more interactive
 - spending time at local hospitals or other relevant organisations e.g. Fred Hollows
 - exchange program with the Eye Hospital
 - have guest speakers visit divisions
 - Skype or webinars with staff from the Eye Hospital in Jerusalem.
- Better **promotion** of the event:
 - promotion through all national/state/territory newsletters
 - new updated video about the week and the hospital
 - poster competition
 - much greater use of social media – Facebook, Twitter, etc.
 - create a Facebook page promoting the week and the hospital

- more leaflets, brochures, posters, bumper stickers, email signatures
- more face-to-face communication about the event – visit divisions etc.
- make sure promotion relates the work of the hospital back to members in Australia.
- Fun ways to **fundraise**:
 - develop cool resources to sell for fundraising and promotion (t-shirts, posters, key rings)
 - team fundraising competitions (who can raise the most money, prizes for those who raise certain amounts of money)
 - consider crowd-funding
 - charity events (e.g. balls/dances, raffles, trivia nights) which members can attend to raise money and awareness
 - car washes, fun-runs and other more active ways to fundraise.
- More incorporation into the rest of **the St John year**:
 - information page in the St John First Responder accreditation and reaccreditation workbooks
 - more information about the Hospital and Ophthalmic Week in the cadet Eye Care Badge Workbook
 - encourage pen pals between cadets here and those in Jerusalem.
- Get **states and territories** more involved in promotion and fundraising:
 - KPIs for each state and territory in terms of fundraising.
- Getting the message to **external organisations**:
 - develop a presentation to give to members for external organisations
 - give away something about the hospital to kids after their First Aid in Schools course
 - short slide at the end of public first aid courses, or video to watch
 - donation tins in shops
 - television/movie/radio ads
 - chalk drawings on footpaths.

National Focus Group

Members of the group consultation were asked to come up with some comprehensive ways in which St John could promote and fundraise for the Hospital after watching the video about the Hospital. A summary of the responses is provided below.

Fundraising

- Developing **partnerships** with external organisations to help us fundraise:
 - like Aussie Farmers, e.g. can they donate 50 cents from each sale to St John Ophthalmic Month, or people elect to donate a \$1 with their sale etc.
 - fundraising tins in shops, optometrists or other outlets.
- Have a **fundraising drive** with prizes for reaching different targets:
 - exclusive prizes will make fundraising much more attractive.

- Use volunteers from corporate organisations (**workplace volunteer programs**) to fundraise for the Hospital.
- Use **education cost equations** to promote when fundraising. For example: \$20,000 will support one nurse for three months:
 - Smaller amounts may be equated to specific procedures or eye-test costs or equipment, and provide incentive even for individual fundraisers to reach fundraising targets.
- Selling **limited edition merchandise** to raise money for the Hospital:
 - e.g. T-shirts with “Eye support St John”
 - e.g. Eyeball darts.

Promotion

- Greater **social media** promotion
 - Using hashtags to engage members on social media e.g. #mostcreativepicture #ophthalmicweek – these can penetrate the organisation.
- Make ophthalmic week more **accessible** to St John members:
 - First Responder Reaccreditation needs to include an Ophthalmic module, or information page
 - increase the duration of ophthalmic week to give divisions a chance to better engage with the event (e.g. Ophthalmic Month)
 - suggest activities to divisions such as inviting their local optometrist to visit, or visiting the optometrist for a tour of the premises, conducting eye dissections etc.
 - create a checklist of activities that divisions can do during Ophthalmic Week/Month and give them a target to meet, e.g. pick 3 of the 15 activities to complete with your members in the next month .
- Organise **free eye health checks** at local optometrists for SJA members
 - Opportunity to advertise the Hospital whilst providing members with a chance to check out their own eye health!
- Greater **advertising** both in St John and externally
 - Re-develop the video for promotional purposes.

Discussion

Ophthalmic care undoubtedly holds a significant place in the history of St John, and this research report demonstrates that the youngest generation of St John, and those who support them, also value the relationship with the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group. The alarming links between blindness and poverty in the area causes more urgency in the support St John Ambulance Australia provides with respect to the awareness and fundraising initiatives throughout Australia.

The discrepancies in knowledge about the Hospital and Ophthalmic Week among the survey respondents, revealed a need for change. Many participants knew only about the Hospital or Ophthalmic Week, not both. Many who had heard about both didn't make a connection between the two, which prompts us to question the effectiveness of the current Ophthalmic Week approach in supporting raising awareness around the Hospital. Awareness is a key factor in gaining support and some strategies need to be reviewed to ensure that the St John membership have the opportunity to engage in this worthy cause. Interestingly, of the sources from which respondents became aware of Ophthalmic Week, none of those cited were of a social media basis. Social media is a primary vehicle for engaging young people in a cause; Facebook is particularly effective, according to a study undertaken by the University of Sydney.²

The current array of Ophthalmic Week resources are well liked according to the results in the survey, however, participants noted the poor penetration of these resources into the organisation. Participants valued the information from the video, and each new viewer learned something about the project. The recommendation from participants was that a new and more engaging video should be produced. If a new video were to be created, promotion should be extensive to equip St John members with sufficient knowledge to feel confident in supporting and fundraising for the Hospital.

Internal and external promotion was well supported in the response to the survey, which further emphasises the importance these participants place on supporting the work of the Hospital. St John members are evidently engaged by the diverse range of activities that St John provides, so maintaining or increasing the current level of promotion opportunities would be beneficial. There is room for improvement in Engaging our divisional members in Ophthalmic Week for only one week during the year calls for improvement, with the recommendation to extend promotional activities to a month-long campaign or continued throughout the year. This was raised by numerous respondents and should be considered when evaluating current promotion methods. External promotion and fundraising activities are currently limited but the research demonstrated a willingness by over three quarters of participants to engage in such activities should they receive the support and be equipped to do so in external communities.

Suggestions from the membership indicate that we need to be creative and modern about the way we approach promotion and fundraising for the Hospital, both internally and externally. Increased use of social media, developing partnerships with other, high

2 <http://sydney.edu.au/news/84.html?newsstoryid=14095>

profile organisations, and coming up with innovative and fun ideas for fundraising drives will be vital to the success of any new promotion and fundraising ventures on behalf of the Hospital. It is clear that we cannot rely solely on our membership, who already gives much time and effort to St John, to raise additional funds.

The research has demonstrated that ophthalmic activities do and should continue to play a significant role in the work of St John Ambulance Australia, however there is much room for improvement in generating awareness of the initiatives and the work of the hospital amongst members. If we are to better engage members, particularly young members, in Ophthalmic Week and the work of the Hospital, a commitment to modernising our ophthalmic initiatives and a more outgoing approach to engaging potential partners and supporters, must be made.

Recommendations

Based on the results, the AYAT recommends the National Office considers making a number of changes in the way in which we approach Ophthalmic Week and methods for engaging members with the Eye Hospital in the future, particularly young members.

The recommendations encompass changes in four areas; awareness, resources, promotion and fundraising:

1. Development of a new St John Eye Hospital video, that is more engaging to a modern and younger audience. We recommend that this video depicts how St John Ambulance Australia supports the Hospital, information about Ophthalmic Week and how divisions and individuals can help the cause, as well as general information on the hospital and its work in the local community. It is particularly important to highlight the connection between St John Ambulance Australia and the Hospital.
2. Increase Ophthalmic Week to Ophthalmic Month, giving divisions a longer period of time with which to engage in ophthalmic activities and increasing flexibility.
3. Develop a specific guide on the expectations/ideas for what divisions could or should do for Ophthalmic Week, including ideas on activities for increasing member knowledge, promotion of the Hospital externally, individual fundraising activities and developing partnerships with relevant local organisations. Current ophthalmic resources should be incorporated into this guide creating a single pack which divisions can access for all their information on Ophthalmic Week
4. Develop novel and innovative centralised fundraising drives for the Hospital, internally and externally, potentially using some of the many ideas presented in the discussion (see *Moving Forwards; Group Consultation*).
5. Increase promotion of the Hospital and Ophthalmic Week through both current and new channels of communication including increased promotion through current social media channels.
 - a. Development of a communications strategy before each year's Ophthalmic Week outlining the different ways in which promotion of the event will be delivered
 - b. As part of the strategy include a new promotional activity each year, such as developing an ophthalmic hashtag for the duration of the event, competitions or other ideas as outlined in this document (see *Moving Forwards, Group Consultation*).

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