

ICEVI European Newsletter

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The President's Message

Dear members and non-members of ICEVI-Europe

Recently I came across an article with the title "Scribit enables blind people to view YouTube movies."

I discovered that at www.scribit.tv, audio description is added to videos by volunteers. In other words, a voice-over describes the action in the videos and adds comments to explain the non-dialogue aspects of scenes during the natural silences in the film or video sequence. How, for example, someone looks, what a person is doing, what a screen shot is about. In this way, it is much easier for blind and visually impaired people to understand what is happening on-screen, enabling them to watch the movies with greater understanding and enjoyment.

For me this is wonderful technology, but what does it mean for a person with visual impairment? It opens a new world. At a time when social media plays an increasingly important role in social life, business and working life, new opportunities are being created for full participation in these key communication platforms for those with a visual impairment.

The right to participation in society is a key element of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) which has now been ratified by 177 countries. The full participation of people with visual impairment in society is also the aim of ICEVI-Europe. One of the ways by which ICEVI-Europe endeavours to achieve its aim, is by organizing workshops and conferences and providing opportunities for sharing knowledge and expertise about new methods for supporting all persons with visual impairment, including those with complex needs, to participate in their own society.

ICEVI-Europe promotes sharing knowledge and experiences by creating and stimulating structured networks of professional interest groups in Europe. It is important that you get to know your colleagues in Europe and to share and discuss with them your own role in supporting persons with visual impairment and additional disabilities.

This year, there was a successful conference on Psychology and Visual Impairment in Thessaloniki, Greece of the Professional Interest Group, the European Network for Psychologists and related professions working in the field of Visual Impairment (ENPVI). In 2019, there will be special conferences for the professional interest groups of Rehabilitation and Teaching and teacher training. We encourage and wholeheartedly invite you to join us at the various ICEVI-Europe events that will be organized throughout the period of 2019-2021, where you will not only learn of recent research and best practices in the

field of visual impairment, but also network with fellow colleagues and establish professional collaborations. You can find further information in this newsletter and on the ICEVI-Europe website.

This newsletter is the last one of 2018. It is a good opportunity to thank everyone for his or her efforts in the past year, which also significantly contributed to making the objectives of ICEVI-Europe concrete. A good occasion also to wish each of you happy and inspiring holidays and a beautiful and healthy 2019.

We will certainly meet each other in the coming year.

On behalf of the Board of ICEVI-Europe,

Hans Welling
President



ICEVI-Europe Agenda of upcoming Events

Your invitation for participation. Save the dates!



French Speaking ICEVI Day-1 Day Workshop in French for teachers and other professionals about inclusive education

8 February 2019

Title: Visual impairment and inclusive education: What's new?

Organized by: INS HEA & ICEVI-Europe and co-organized by the National School of the Blind in Paris, INJA

Venue: INS HEA, 58 Avenue des Landes, 92 150 Suresnes, France

Program Committee Meeting & ICEVI-Europe Board Meeting

25 February - 1 March 2019

In Jerusalem, Israel

ICEVI-Europe Professional interest group, Teaching and Teacher training, Conference in Suresnes, France (near Paris)

16-17 April 2019 (arrival 15 April - departure 18 April)

Theme: What is good, can always be better

Wondering how to improve the mathematical performances of blind students?

Venue: INSHEA, 58 Avenue des Landes, 92 150 Suresnes, France

7TH ICEVI-European Balkan Conference in Sofia, Bulgaria

20-23 October 2019 (arrival 20 October - departure 23 October)

Theme: Free access, real educational inclusion and unlimited technology

10th Conference of ICEVI-Europe in Jerusalem, Israel

8-12 August 2021 (arrival 7 Aug 2021 - with optional excursions on 13 and 14 August)

Theme: "Access to Learning and Learning to Access"

Venue: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

In preparation:

ICEVI-Europe Professional interest group, Rehabilitation, Conference in Budapest, Hungary

Provisional Dates: 31 May- 1 June 2019 (probable arrival 30 May - departure 2 June)

Venue: Mohahaz, Gizella út 42-44, 1143 Budapest

Conference of the ICEVI-Europe Professional interest group, Early Intervention

Recent ICEVI-Europe Events

VIII ICEVI East European Conference

27-29 September 2018 (arrival 26 September - departure 30 September)

Organized by the International Council for Education and Rehabilitation of People with Visual Impairment, Europe (ICEVI-Europe) with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation and the Yuri Gagarin State Technical University of Saratov.

Where: In Saratov, Russia

Theme: Accessible Environment for People with Disabilities

Venue: Yuri Gagarin State Technical University of Saratov

[For the Deadlines of Abstract Submission & Registration, as well as, further information regarding Registration, the Call for Abstracts, Accommodation, Transportation, please visit the conference website.](#)

The 7th ICEVI European Conference on Psychology and Visual Impairment

1-2 November 2018 (arrival 31 October - departure 3 November)

ICEVI-Europe Professional interest group, European network for psychologists and related professions working in the field of Visual Impairment (ENPVI)

Conference in Thessaloniki, Greece

Hosted by KEAT, the Center for Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind in Greece, located in Thessaloniki and Athens, and organized in cooperation with ENPVI, European network for psychologists and related professions working in the field of Visual Impairment.

Theme: Diversity in many ways

Venue: Mediterranean Palace Hotel, Salaminos 3, 546 26, Thessaloniki, Greece

[For further information about 7th ICEVI European Conference on Psychology and Visual Impairment, please visit the conference website.](#)

1st Rehabilitation Conference of ICEVI-Europe in Budapest

Beata Pronay

Associate Professor, Eotvos Lorand University, Faculty of Special Education, Budapest, Hungary



Dear colleagues,

At the 9th ICEVI European Conference in Brugges 2017, in accordance with the plan envisioned by the late Mrs. Betty Leotsakou, the Immediate Past President of ICEVI-Europe, the ICEVI-Europe General Assembly voted to establish a professional interest group in Rehabilitation.

Therefore, ICEVI-Europe together with the national organization LÁRESZ Association warmly invite you to join the

1st Rehabilitation Conference of ICEVI-Europe in Budapest 31st May – 1st June.

Conference Committee

Hans Welling, President of ICEVI-Europe

Gabriella Varga, President of LÁRESZ Association

Beáta Prónay, Board Member of ICEVI-Europe, responsible for the rehabilitation interest group

1 Title and Theme of the Conference

“Expanding Independence in all Ages”

Topics:

O&M Classical approaches

O&M in early intervention, O&M with special groups: the elderly, children with CVI, children and people with physical disabilities, deafblindness, etc,

O&M with GPS

O&M with guide dogs

Using maps, new trends in tactile graphics

ADL

Meeting challenges across the age and ability range

Sports & recreation as tools of rehabilitation – the role of arts and crafts

Social skills

Meeting the psychological challenges of VI

Empowerment and self-determination

Assistive technology & communication skills

Vocational - occupational rehabilitation

2 Dates and Program

30th May 2019 Arrival and informal meeting

31st May 2019 Conference day

1st June 2019 Conference day

3 Homepage

of 1st (re)habilitation Conference “Expanding Independence in all Ages” will open on the 7th January 2019 on the website of the host organization

<https://lareszegyesulet.hu/>.

4 Venue

MOHA Ház

Moha Ház is a new facility for conferences and meetings with a good public transport links to the city centre.

<http://mohahaz.hu/index.php>

<http://mohahaz.hu/index.php/konferenciatermek>

on facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Event-Planner/MOHA-H%C3%A1z-412736428737831/>

Transportation to the conference venue is easy from any direction. A variety of accommodation is available locally that meets a wide range of budgets.

We don't provide accommodation but we can help with advice and guidance.

4 Conference target group

Professionals from the (re)habilitation field for those with visual impairments across all ages.

5 Exhibitions

The organizers welcome approaches from exhibitors of assistive devices and access technologies to present at the conference.

Poster presentations are most welcome.

6 Abstracts

Abstracts for oral presentation, posters, workshops and symposia are welcome according to the conference theme.

Abstract submission will open when conference site will open – 7th of January.

Deadline for abstract submission is 22th February

7 Registration

The registration will open on the 7th of January on the conference website at <https://lareszegyesulet.hu/>.

8 Proceedings

Conference presentations/papers – proceedings – will be available on <https://lareszegyesulet.hu/> and on the ICEVI-Europe website after the conference.

Further information you will find on the conference website at <https://lareszegyesulet.hu/> and at ICEVI-Europe after 7th January.

What is good, can always be better. Wondering how to improve the mathematical performances of blind students?

Dear colleagues,

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that we invite you to attend the conference on improving the mathematical abilities of blind students.

The conference will be preceded by a dinner on the 15th of April, at INSHEA, a university institute near Paris which, among other activities, trains teachers to teach students with special needs.

We look forward to welcoming you at the conference in Suresnes!

Hans Welling, President of ICEVI-Europe

Nathalie Lewi-Dumont, Board Member of ICEVI-Europe

Annemiek van Leendert, Conference Chairperson

1 Title and Theme of the Conference

What is good, can always be better.

Wondering how to improve the mathematical performances of blind students?

Many blind students encounter difficulties while doing mathematics. To help children overcome these difficulties their teachers need to have knowledge not just of mathematics but also of the additional teaching approaches and assistive devices that blind children need e.g. braille, Text-to-Speech synthesizer and tactile drawings. For example, the teacher needs to understand how reading and comprehending a tactile graph with your fingertips is different to reading with your eyes and the teacher needs to be able to explain the basic mathematical concepts of the graph in terms a blind child will understand.

This is just one example. During the conference we want to map the knowledge and skills visiting and mathematics teachers need to support blind

students in mathematics. Therefore, we need input from both visiting and mathematics teachers. We will put all this information into a manual that must be “completed” at the end of the conference. We regard this manual as a living document that will be updated at the next conference (ICEVI, Jerusalem 2021).

We warmly recommend you to participate in this conference because it is a great opportunity to exchange experiences and knowledge with colleagues.

2 Dates and Program

15 April 2019 Arrival (Monday)

16-17 April 2019 Conference Days (Tuesday & Wednesday)

18 April 2019 Departure (Thursday)

15 April 2019 dinner at 19:00

16 April 2019 lunch and dinner, coffee break

17 April 2019 lunch and dinner, coffee break

18 April 2019 breakfast*

3 Venue

The conference will take place at [INSHEA in Suresnes](#), near Paris. The address is 58 Avenue des Landes, 92150 Suresnes-France.

For your accommodation, there are 40 bedrooms available in the institute, INSHEA, and several hotel facilities are available in the neighborhood. Please be informed that toilets are available outside of the bedrooms in INSEA.

4 Keynote speech

Welcome by: Nathalie Lewi-Dumont, on behalf of the board of ICEVI-Europe

Keynote: Theme of the conference by: Annemiek van Leendert

5 Target group

Visiting and mathematics teachers of blind students in secondary and special secondary education.

6 Exhibition

Exhibition of assistive devices and posters from participants.

7 Abstracts

The conference is composed of presentations, cases, posters, workshops and discussions. You are cordially invited to give a poster or paper presentation on one of the following topics:

- mathematical braille notation
- good practice(s) in supporting blind students in mathematics
- (research on) mathematical education for blind students
- interesting cases

Submission of abstract of paper or poster:

If you want to give a presentation you will have to submit an abstract. The word limit for the abstract is 250 words, written in the English language. Please submit your completed Official Abstract Form before **1 February 2019** to AnnemiekvanLeendert@outlook.com. You will be informed about the review results and revision requested by **1 March 2019**.

Paper Presentation:

Your accepted paper will be presented and discussed in time slots of 30 minutes.

All papers will be included in the conference proceedings.

8 Registration

To register as a conference participant, you have to submit via email a completed Participant's Registration Form by **February 1, 2019**, as well as, transfer the payment for your conference registration fee.

9 Proceedings

In addition to the papers presented, the proceedings may include the manual, recommendations and resolutions.

10 Future of the Professional Interest Group, Teaching and teacher training

For further information and registration, see the [website of ICEVI-Europe](#).

International Symposium on Physical Activity and Individuals with Visual Impairments or Deafblindness: Where Research meets Practice - Call for Papers and Registration

Organised by Scottish Sensory Centre

Venue: John MacIntyre Conference Centre, University of Edinburgh, Scotland on Thursday, 9th - Sunday, 12th May 2019

Keynote Address: Erik Weihenmayer, Adventurer/Explorer
<https://erikweihenmayer.com/>

Plus presentations from **Lauren Lieberman** PhD and **Pam Haibach-Beach** PhD, Institute of Movement Studies for Individuals with Visual Impairments, Brockport, NY; **Judit Gombás** PhD, Eotvos Lorand University, Hungary ... and many more

Cost: £300 (excl. Accommodation)

Closing date: 1st February 2019

For further details of the Conference please go to:

www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/paivid

Sheila Mackenzie

Scottish Sensory Centre, Moray House School of Education

University of Edinburgh, Paterson's Land, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8AQ

Conference report: 7th European Conference on Psychology and Visual Impairment in honour of Betty Leotsakou vision

By **Peter Verstraten**, The Netherlands

At the 6th edition of this conference in Budapest, November 2016, Betty Leotsakou, president of ICEVI Europe, invited the members of the European Network on Psychology and Visual Impairment to have their next conference in Thessaloniki, Greece, an offer that was willingly accepted. Less than two months later Betty died.

Thankfully her colleagues the Centre for Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind (KEAT) which is located in Thessaloniki and Athens took on Betty's invitation and organised a great conference in Thessaloniki 1 and 2 November 2018 dedicated to Betty.

About 60 participants enjoyed the conference held on the 7th floor of the Mediterranean Palace Hotel in Thessaloniki, which offers a beautiful view over the city's harbour which was enjoyed during coffee breaks. The theme of the conference was 'Diversity in many ways'. Therefore there was also a great diversity in the presentations and posters with almost 20 oral presentations, some 10 posters and a film. The different sessions were chaired by the members of the steering group of the network: Elke Wagner, Elsebeth Mortensen, Michael Bergström Mörman and Peter Verstraten. Fifth member Bo Kjærgaard Andersen could unfortunately not be present.

The key note speech was presented by Efstratios Kontopoulos on empowering people with deafblindness through the European project SUITCEYES. Papers presented included 'Serious games for visually impaired children with CVI and for enhancing well-being, coping and self-concept of young visually impaired children' (Kruithof), 'A community-based mentoring program for visually impaired adolescents' (Heppe), 'A support program for families and educators' (Vonikaki) and 'Teacher training for those working with visual impairment and additional disabilities' (Hathazi).

Brandsborg spoke about siblings of children with a visual impairment and Bata about stress and parental competences of visually impaired mothers. Vandamme presented a workshop on sex and relationship education, showing how to use the sex kit.

Gombás elucidated the added value of volunteering by visually impaired adults. Schweizer presented about role diversity in a care institution for blind and visually impaired adults. Other papers about visually impaired adults included presentations on the impact of the combination of a visual impairment and psychiatric problems (Teunissen) and on traumatic events and posttraumatic stress (van der Ham). Padure discussed sports performance and personality characteristics of visually impaired athletes.

In two presentations also the financial aspects of care systems were highlighted as in the Swedish support system for children with visual impairment (Bergström Mörman) and the multiple financial challenges in case of multiple care demands (Beukers).

Withagen presented the development of a learning line about the transformation of a 3D object into a 2D tactile drawing and Heyl paid attention to the Intelligence and Development Scales-2 (IDS-2) for children and adolescents with visual impairment.

The conference was closed with the film 'The space before sleep' from the Danish artist Kristina Steinbock. The most frequently heard response to this film's presentation was "food for thought" which also sums it up quite nicely for the entire conference. A conference that Betty Leotsakou would have been proud of. As she also would have been proud of her colleagues from KEAT who were the warm Greek hosts of a very interesting and interactive conference.

Pictures and presentations will be made available on the website of the European Network on Psychology and Visual Impairment (enpvi.net). The next ECPVI conference will very likely be held in 2020 in Prague.

Report from the Vilnius Conference 'Different but together - inclusive education of the blind and visually impaired". 30th October, 2018, Vilnius, Lithuania

By **Dalia Taurienė**, Lithuanian training Centre for the Blind and visually impaired

A major international event took place in Vilnius Lithuanian Training Centre for the Blind and Visually impaired. The conference brought together teachers from mainstream schools, tiflopedagogues (specialist teachers of the visually impaired), members of the Union of the Blind and Visually Impaired, administrators from the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science. There were representatives from centres for the blind and visually impaired across Europe including: the Estonian Tartu Emajoje School, the Latvian Strazdumuiza boarding school for the blind and visually impaired in Riga, Italian Sant'Alessio Centre for the blind and visually impaired in Rome. About 100 participants presented and discussed the situation in each country concerning inclusive education of visually impaired children together with the support system. The ICEVI-Europe President, Hans Welling, in his speech gave an overview of the quality criteria in inclusive education in European Union.

The topics for discussion groups covered the models for supporting inclusive education in each country and the challenges in this work. Participants shared information about the ongoing projects and research. All participants expressed their concern about training in visual impairment at all possible levels. It is very common that new staff have no opportunities for formal training. In many cases, training is provided 'in-house' and 'on the job'. Some countries still have training programmes at university level for special teachers but even these often have very low content about visual impairment. It was agreed that that we have to enable and encourage each other to cooperate across the organizational and geographical borders, in order to maintain the special skills in education in visual impairment.

In summary therefore, this was a successful conference filled with knowledge and expertise, which focused strongly on the current issues in the field of inclusion education.

VIII ICEVI East European Conference: Accessible environment for people with disabilities: results and prospects

By **Ruchin Vladimir**, Board Member of ICEVI-Europe, Eastern European countries (Russia)

On September 27-29, 2018 VIII ICEVI East European Conference "Accessible environment for people with disabilities" took place in Saratov.

The concept of an inclusive or accessible environment is based on the conviction that the right to life and social mobility in society is a fundamental human right which provides a basis for greater social justice through the integration of vulnerable groups of population.

The aim of the conference is to search for technological and social means of rehabilitation and mitigation of barriers of inequality for people with visual impairments and other disabilities.

Main results

The conference took place for three days at several locations, which are Yuri Gagarin State Technical University and Saratov State University named after N.G. Chernyshevsky. Also, guests were invited to the Boarding School number 3 of the city of Saratov, where they were shown how blind and visually impaired children study, and also to the Center for training and rehabilitation for people with disabilities named "Sail of Hope".

Before the event, the guests visited the exhibition of technical and technological means of rehabilitation and alleviation of inequality for people with limited vision and other types of disabilities.

The work of the conference was widely represented by the news feed of the leading Russian TV channels, newspapers, and Internet publications. Support of ICEVI-Europe allowed the conference to become a part of the European educational space.

About 160 participants initially registered to participate in the conference, but over 200 people actually took part in it. In addition, more than 500 people

attended the exhibition of equipment for the visually impaired people and various types of disabilities.

Achievements

It should be emphasized that the conference has a number of important achievements, which should be discussed separately.

First of all, this is a jubilee conference, because exactly ten years ago, Hans Welling, President of ICEVI organized the first conference of this type. Then, with his personal participation and participation of a group of European specialists, as well as representatives of 7 Eastern European countries, a grand event took place. Back in 2008, the conference participants visited a number of special educational institutions and held master classes. It should be noted that the first conference of ICEVI in Russia gave a positive impact in order to change the situation not only in the region, but also in the whole country. Relations between national representatives of ICEVI in Eastern European countries have significantly strengthened.

Second, the conference brought together the two largest universities in Saratov (more than 50,000 students) and eleven Russian universities (including universities in Moscow and St. Petersburg), which have either special education faculties or departments dedicated to this subject. Such unification has allowed to expand the topics of discussions, which, based on the conference program, affected all aspects of the accessible environment.

Third, the conference was held with the support of the Ministry of Education of Russia and the government of the Saratov region, whose representatives took part in the conference. The topic of accessible environment is extremely relevant for our region. Since 2010, we have entered the program of inclusive education. This program works on the territory of each educational institution of the region.

Fourth, the conference was attended by more than ten public and non-governmental organizations whose activities are focused on supporting people with limited vision and other disabilities. These organizations have greatly expanded the number of participants from among parents and children. The conference included not only discussions, master classes, workshops, but also real consultations for people with disabilities.

Fifth, representatives of equipment manufacturers for people with disabilities, not only from Russia, but also from Europe participated in the conference. This participation was made possible only thanks to the information support of ICEVI-Europe. Moreover, the equipment exhibitions attracted a huge number of exhibitors, including those from other regions of Russia.

Sixth, the success of the conference is undoubtedly associated with the leading role of the ICEVI committee. The key role of the Board Members made it possible to clearly formulate the main ideas of the conference and make them available on the ICEVI-Europe website and WBU website. Friendly advice, criticism and support of Board Members helped to avoid one-sidedness in organizing the conference. All this determined the long-term results in the implementation of the ideas of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Long-term results

Conference participants point out that ICEVI-Europe has a positive and promising experience of cooperation with the Yury Gagarin State Technical University and Saratov State University named after N.G. Chernyshevsky. Speakers at the sections and discussion platforms emphasized the effectiveness of close interaction with the ICEVI committee at all stages of the conference preparation. This contributed to the involvement in the discussion of the significant social theme «Inclusion» of representatives of parents, educational, social and governmental organizations.

As a result of the conference, SSTU and SSU have become essential resource centres for working with people with disabilities.

Significant role was played by non-governmental organizations, which during VIII ICEVI East European Conference provided assistance to people with disabilities: parents and children (in the evening and then after the end of the conference).

First Results from the Erasmus + PrECIVIM project – Project report

Assoc.Prof. Dr. **Vassilis Argyropoulos**, University of Thessaly, Greece

The first results from the PrECIVIM project ("Promoting Effective Communication for Individuals with a Vision Impairment and Multiple Disabilities–PrECIVIM"/Project Number: 2017-1-EL01-KA201-036289) are described in Intellectual Output 1 (IO1). Intellectual Output 1 (entitled "Scoping") refers to a detailed situation analysis which addresses and determines the special needs and challenges of students with MDVI within the current situation. IO1 aimed at current educational frames and communication methods for professional use within the population of MDVI. For this reason, this initial phase of the project is considered of great importance because its methodology focuses in detail on case studies, educational frames,

communication methods and communication assessment, literature review, policies, practices and research. It was found that Cyprus, Greece, Romania and United Kingdom, have adopted generic legislation for the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities and all countries apart from Cyprus have some basic legislation aimed specifically at those with multiple disabilities (including MDVI). Regarding the domain of practice, it was found by the contribution of six educational settings which participate in the PrECIVIM project, that there is a need to systematize their approaches and to disseminate them more widely, especially given the big gap in training programmes for teachers. In addition, it is underscored in IO1 that there are few research studies on MDVI across the participating countries, a lack of clarity as to what MDVI is, and a great variety of terminology currently in use. The product of this work (i. e. IO1) will be uploaded in the [PrECIVIM site](#) in order to facilitate transferability to other stakeholders apart from the members of the project consortium (i. e. the University of Thessaly/Greece, the University of Babes Bolyai/Romania), the University of Roehampton/United Kingdom, St Barnabas School for the Blind/Cyprus, The Special School for the Deafblind/Greece, Liceul Special pentru Deficienti de Vedere Cluj-Napoca/Romania, Whitefield Academy Trust/United Kingdom, and AMIMONI/Greece)."

Principles of communication with people who are blind and visually impaired

By **Gašper Tanšek**, Teacher of Physical Education – Center IRIS, Slovenia

The inability to process multilevel messages interferes greatly with the process of communication (Kačič, 2000).

Communication for the person who is blind or visually impaired is a vital skill. The person who is blind has a different perception of the external world than a person who is fully sighted. A fully sighted person may detect the non-verbal messages of the blind person and will be able to respond to them appropriately. On the other hand, the person who is blind is often unable to register these non-verbal messages and this may lead to a sense of misunderstanding on both sides, which can negatively affect further communication (Kermauner, 2010).

Blind and visually impaired people can be helped to use their listening and kinesthetic perception skills to supplement their exchanges and gain insight into the feelings of the person they are talking to.

Communication is often performed unconsciously, for example if people are tense, this is often reflected in their physical state and movement. People's voices, the way they speak, their breathing, can all give clues that the blind person can detect at a distance.

Obviously when we approach people who are blind we therefore we have first to make sure that they are aware of our presence and allow them to prepare themselves for the encounter. We need to introduce ourselves by name and, if there are other people in the room, ensure that the blind person realises that our words are directed to him/her.

Researchers have developed a range of guidelines to aid communication between people who are blind and people who are fully sighted e.g. Hafnar (2013) who recommends speaking clearly and directly and keeping messages short and verifying of the information received.

Here are some other practical tips I have found that can make communication easier for you as a sighted person:

If you welcome a friend who is blind or visually impaired, do not forget to identify yourself. For example, "Hello, Michael, that's me, Franck." Introduce yourself - do not assume that a person will recognize you by your voice. In the group situation, introduce the other persons who are there.

Speak directly to the person who is visually impaired and not through an intermediary.

Speak clearly with natural conversation tone and speed. Unless a person has a hearing impairment, you do not need to increase the volume of your voice. Speak naturally and clearly. Loss of vision does not mean loss of hearing.

Address your friend or relative by name, so he will immediately know that you are talking to him rather than someone who happens to be nearby.

As soon as a friend, relative, or stranger who is blind or visually impaired enters a room, be sure to greet the person by name. This alerts him to your presence, avoids startling him, and eliminates uncomfortable silences.

Be an active listener. Give the person opportunities to talk. Respond with questions and comments to keep the conversation going. A person who is visually impaired can't necessarily see mimic on your face, so give verbal signs to let him or her know that you are actively listening.

Always answer questions and be specific or descriptive in your responses.

Say when you are leaving and where you are going if it is appropriate, for example, going to the living room.

Use precise and specific instructions. For example, "doors are on the left side" instead of "doors are there".

Indicate the end of a conversation with a person who is blind or severely visually impaired to avoid the embarrassment of leaving the person speaking when no one is actually there.

Information and Consultation Stations for the newly blind and the visually impaired (VI) in Israel

By **Ary Grinberg** – Project coordinator, **Moshe Oved** – Director of the Aleh society, **Zohar Ginio** – Chairman of the Aleh society

For the newly blind and visually impaired, the intervention of functional rehabilitation services as close as possible to onset of blindness is crucial (Noy, 1998). However, in practice, not many newly blind people seek rehabilitation services, although these are provided free of charge in the community.

We believe that the main reason for the relatively small number of newly blind people who actually take up rehabilitation services lies in the lack of communication between the medical and the rehabilitation systems. On losing their eye sight, individuals first encounter the medical system, which often doesn't inform them about the various rehabilitation options that are open to them. As a result, once the medical care has been completed, they fall in the gap between the two systems.

Based on this assumption, Aleh Society together with the Ministry of Welfare, established the Information and Consultation Stations located inside hospitals' eye clinics.

The main goal of the service is to assist newly visually impaired and blind people in starting their rehabilitation process as quickly as possible, so that at the same time as being notified of their condition by the ophthalmologist, they are informed that they are eligible for personal rehabilitation services. The rationale being that physical presence of rehabilitation service agents inside eye clinics allows the newly blind to access valuable information about the rehabilitation services they are entitled to, and consequently increase their chances for a successful, and cost efficient process of rehabilitation.

During 2017, Aleh Society has activated 24 information stations in eye clinics across the country and three 'Hot Lines' in Hebrew, Arabic and Russian. The information stations and hot lines act as a referral link between the patients, the medical services and the rehabilitation services. In that year, some 4,500 newly visually impaired and blind people took advantage of this new information and consultation agency.

The services provided by the stations include:

- a. First response emotional support.

- b. Essential information about rehabilitation services in general, as well as referrals to appropriate rehabilitation services such as: Low Vision Clinic, Activities of Daily Living (ADL), Orientation and Mobility (O&M), Communication, etc.
- c. In addition, the agents assisted with more administrative services such as: establishing the application process for Blind/Visually Impaired Identification Card (I.D) issued by the Ministry of Welfare; referral to Social Security for disability financial benefits; referral to rehabilitation centres; providing information about available devices and where they may be purchased with state subsidized rates, etc.

Furthermore, three months after the initial consultation, a follow-up phone call is made, to ensure that the patients have actually taken advantage of the services they are entitled to (and in case they did not, to understand the reasons for that). During this follow up, further assistance is offered, and extra referrals are given according to stated need.

The positions of agents at the information and consultation stations and 'hot lines' is filled by university graduates and students of therapeutic and rehabilitation professions, all of whom are blind or visually impaired.

There are three reasons for the great importance of employing agents who are visually impaired themselves:

1. The agents can serve as role models for patients coping with a new severe functional and emotional situation.
2. Visually impaired themselves, our agents have a deep understanding of the consequences and the effects of visual impairment on one's life. That alone serves as an "ice breaker" between them and the newly blind patients, helping the latter to realize that despite the visual impairment running a routine life is possible.
3. The position of the blind and visually impaired agents as genuine part of the eye clinic staff not only provides them with a venue of employment, but it also allows them to gain professional experience fundamental for future employment.

In conclusion, the main goal of the information and consultation stations is to locate and support people who have recently suffered severe loss of sight and are starting their long journey to maintain a functional independence as well as their life style.

Israel's Ministry of Welfare acknowledged the importance of this service and awarded the Aleh Society for its achievement of initiating and running this project effectively. The award will be given to Aleh at a special ceremony to be held on December 12th, 2018.

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Salus University's Global Efforts to Reduce Shortages in the Field of Visual Impairment

Salus University, located in Pennsylvania, United States of America, has been offering programs in blindness and low vision studies since 1983 in the following areas of study:

- Low Vision Rehabilitation (LVR)
- Teaching Children and Youth with Visual Impairments (TVI)
- Orientation and Mobility (O&M)
- Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT)



The quality of our programs attracts students from within and outside of the US (e.g., Singapore, Ireland, Canada). This is possible thanks to the hybrid nature of our programming, which offers most of the coursework online with only one or two (depending on the program) residency requirements on campus where students experience intensive hands-on learning. Countries without access to professional education in blindness and low vision can work with Salus' Department of International and Continuing Education to develop programs tailored to their meet their needs, including a "train the trainer" approach that would allow students educated in the US to return to their country of origin and share their expertise with local colleagues. International students also benefit from selected course offerings as professional development, without needing to attend face-to-face classes, adding valued richness to our courses and contributing to a global understanding of our field.

Salus University is constantly assessing and responding to the needs of individuals with visual impairments and the professionals that work with them. It is now well documented that Neurological Visual Impairments (including Cortical and Cerebral Visual Impairments) constitute a major cause of visual

impairment in children, particularly in developed countries (Bunce, C., et al., 2017; Maitreya, A., Rawat, D., & Pandey, S., 2018; Martin, et al., 2016; Salavati, et. al, 2017, to cite a few). However, many professionals do not feel adequately prepared to work with this population.



In an effort to alleviate this situation, Salus has developed a Micro-credential/Continuing Education Certificate in Neurological Impairment (NVI) in Children. This eight-week online course is offered to current practitioners in the field of blindness and low vision and provides in-depth education in the following areas: overview and causes of NVI, brain involvement in visual processing, visual behaviors in children with NVI, assessment and intervention methods, the CVI Range, Orientation and Mobility for children with NVI, and strategies for working with families and teams.

Students currently enrolled in this course share:

"I already feel at this point in the course that I will be a better educator and advocate both for students with NVI and for professionals in the field."

"This course has been incredibly eye-opening."

"I learned a tremendous amount of ideas that I will be adding to my evaluations and lessons."

Our next offering of this course will start February 11, 2019, with details and registration information available on the Salus website.

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In an Effort to Better Share Information and Knowledge on the Evaluation and Treatment of Persons with Visual Impairments, Vision Specialty Tracks & a Doctorate Are Now Available for International Vision Specialists and Occupational Therapists in our Post-Professional Occupational Therapy Program at Salus University



Salus University invites international vision specialists and occupational therapists to apply for our specialty certificate program. International occupational therapists are invited to apply for a post-professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program which uniquely positions entry-level trained occupational therapists as future leaders, and advanced content experts. The academic content provides an emphasis on inter-professional collaboration. OTD specialty tracks and specialty certificate program courses feature 3 cutting-edge tracks including:

Low Vision Rehabilitation: This track is designed to prepare occupational therapists and vision specialists to specialize in working with persons with severe visual impairment via state-of-the-art training from an internationally recognized faculty of experts in the field of low vision. Courses concentrate on low vision assessment and intervention techniques to enhance participation in

occupations and daily living skills for clients for whom vision impacts their independence and quality of life.

Remedial Vision Rehabilitation: Pediatrics and Acquired Brain Injury:

This track is designed to enable occupational therapists and vision specialists to gain a comprehensive understanding of vision problems that are prevalent in the acquired brain injury and pediatric populations. Students will learn how to screen for the most commonly occurring problems and perform remedial vision rehabilitation for clients with these problems with ongoing collaboration with an optometrist.

Health and Wellness: This track is designed to enable occupational therapists to gain a comprehensive and advanced/evidence-based perspectives of holistic and innovative health care for individuals, groups or populations with or at-risk for chronic illness or disability. Students will be exposed to OT's role in health assessment and health promotion activities across the life span.

The program is designed to be convenient for full-time working professionals, allowing for students to complete the 12 credit specialty certificate program in as little as 8 months. The 30 credit OTD can be completed in as little as 16 months or as long as 6 years. Students will learn primarily online through distance learning, with two face-to-face courses to teach students hands-on, experiential skills taught by internationally known experts including Dr. Mitchel Scheiman, Dr. Steve Whittaker, Dr. Marjorie Scaffa, Dr. Ruth Farber, and Dr. Fern Silverman.

International applicants must have completed a bachelor's degree in a related profession or in an occupational therapy program to be eligible for the post-professional specialty certificate program.

Our recent graduates from both the OTD program and specialty tracks have been hired as vision specialists in schools, hospitals, telehealth practices, and universities. Two have submitted publications to international journals to share their knowledge and expertise within the field! As part of an academic community, our occupational therapy program is dedicated to learning, discovery, engagement and impact. We seek to inspire students to become advanced practitioners, leaders within their fields, and vision specialists who respect the need for lifelong learning and value the unique synergies possible utilizing an inter-professional approach. The education of advanced occupational therapists and vision specialists reinforces utilization of inter-professional evidence-based strategies and contributions to the development of new knowledge and skills.

Please contact admissions@salus.edu.

For more information please visit our website at www.salus.edu.



Innovative learning & writing solution for visually impaired



Background

Gnotebook - an innovative Israeli company in the educational arena. Founded by group of educators, professors, educational therapists & ophthalmologists. Gnotebook aims to introduce an organized learning experience and emphasize the importance of handwriting.

The importance of handwriting

In our keyboard age, it has been scientifically proven on writing vs. typing, that when a student writes, a neural circuit locked in the brain, and this action dramatically improves:

- Memory
- creativity
- linguistic competence

(Source: Prof. Stanislas Dehaene).

The Challenge

Following 15 years of studies, research, pilot projects, full implementation at almost a thousand preschools, elementary, high- schools in Israel with a wide range of student types: ordinary students, individuals with learning difficulties, learning disorders (ADD/ADHD), impaired vision, and visually stressed, we found that the Gnotebook improves learning and writing skills for all of them.

Even more importantly, when the entire class uses the Gnotebook, a wonderful sense of class unity results.

Value proposition

The use of the Gnotebook lets every student have a successful writing experience from their very first attempt. It increases their awareness of organizational skills, neatness and preciseness as they focus of proper study & writing habits. Its Didactic Sequence feature eliminates the use of binders, folders, plastic sheet protectors and other supplies. It facilitates School Branding, showcasing an educational message chosen by each school on the notebook cover and creating a sense of school pride. The Gnotebook offers Financial Savings to both the school and the parents.

It's 4A - (Acceptable, Affordable, Accessible, Available)

Gnotebook yields definite **financial savings** of about \$50 per student per year, and thousands of dollars for each school.

Gnotebook is available in all languages written from **left to right** (English, Russian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and others), as well as from **right to left** (Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, etc.). The Gnotebook is designed for use in all subjects (English, languages, math).

Tailor made solution

In cooperation with the Blind Centre in Israel, Ministry of Education- Dept. of student with special needs, Occupational therapists, Visual experts, Dr.'s and professors from the Academy, we developed writing Notebooks in all subjects of study, adopted in all languages (left to right and right to left), from pre-school to academy, for visually impaired population.

We analysed the needs of Visually impaired, such:

- The paper colour
- The paper size
- The borders and the separation of the lines
- The contrast of the lines
- The letters at the language-bar
- Special adaptation per group of age (pre-school, elementary, high-school & adults)

And designed solution which will turn handwriting into positive learning experience and not burden. For the past 3 years, we made pilot among thousands of visually impaired students from all age groups, in 3 languages (English, Hebrew, Arabic) and results were simply amazing.

Acceptance by all parties

Nowadays, it is highly endorsed by UN/WBU, Blind Centre of Israel, ICEVI Israel, ministry of education, which approved to be THE NOTEBOOK for visually impaired community. We would like to duplicate the success for all visually impaired students around the globe, and would like to ask your support on that matter. We believe that if it's good for all students here, then it's good for 240 Million visually impaired around the world. More videos and professional info can be found on our website.