

## News letter - ISLRR July 2023

### From the Editor

It is an exciting time for low vision research and rehabilitation. Techniques for harnessing neuroplasticity to enhance vision are showing promise and new portable, immersive technologies are providing unique opportunities for enhancing mobility. The involvement of end-users in the conceptualization and design of new research programs is also gaining traction.

ISLRR members work at the intersection of multiple disciplines including clinical care, rehabilitation, public health, neuroscience, engineering and many more. Together, we are ideally placed to improve the quality of life of people with low vision on an international scale.

The ISLRR newsletter provides a forum to share new developments with the low vision research and rehabilitation community. We welcome a broad range of content including comments on new research, funding opportunities, meetings, scholarships, resources, and new initiatives. Please feel free to submit content at any time for inclusion in the newsletter.

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## From the President

I hope that everyone is doing well and beginning to emerge from the last couple of years! Like everyone else we have faced some extenuating circumstances; however, I believe we are emerging more resourceful than we were before. We have a new website, logo and leadership!



A lot has happened over the last year, and it is our pleasure to bring to you this edition of ISLRR VIEW after a long hiatus of 1 year since our last edition in July 2022.

It feels great to get this newsletter back on track!

We have several interesting topics in this edition and my sincere thanks to Lorenzo Billiet (Amsterdam UMC, Netherlands), Walter Wittich (Universite de Montreal, Canada) and Paolo G. Limoli (LOC President -Vision 2025, Florence, Italy) for providing articles towards this edition of our newsletter.

Lorenzo Billiet and his team are conducting a qualitative study to generate knowledge that can contribute to the further development of a International Classification of Functioning , Disability and Health (ICF) core set for people with visual impairment or blindness. The WHO developed the ICF to provide an international framework to identify and measure disability and health. Although the ICF has core sets for a variety of health conditions, low vision has not been

addressed as yet. A core set tries to map the factors that influence quality of life (QoL) and describes what is relevant to functioning. It provides an important tailor-made tool as it informs (measurement) themes in research and treatment policy in clinical practice, based on international consensus. The added value for an ICF core set Vision Loss is that it has the potential to advance research and improve treatment outcomes and take policy making to a higher level as they will meet the themes that are indicated as most relevant to patients and practitioners around the world, in developed and low and middle income countries.

In addition, the core set can contribute to the development of standardized evaluation instruments, documents, treatment guidelines or the mapping of areas for the improvement of QoL. Lorenzo Billiet and his team decided to develop an evidence-based ICF core set for vision loss in adults and the elderly.

The authors have provided details and links for the survey in their write-up. I encourage you to spread the word about this project and get your friends, colleagues, former co-students etc. to help with the survey. Please share the links with your patients too.

The Visual Impairment & Rehabilitation option in Low Vision as well as Orientation & Mobility in the Master of Vision Science program at the Université de Montréal are now fully accredited by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired. Walter Wittich (Professor, Université de Montréal, Canada) has sent us this announcement and this program represents a wonderful opportunity for those looking to expand their knowledge base in comprehensive low vision rehabilitation.

Please disseminate this information among your peers and prospective students and encourage them to apply!

I know that it is too early to think of Vision 2025. However, the organizers of the next conference are excited to share their first announcement regarding the conference to be held in Florence, Italy, 9-12 September 2025. Please BLOCK your dates on the calendar for this exciting conference.

Finally, if you happen to know of any prospective members, please talk to them about joining our society. As with any organization, new members are the lifeblood and the younger the better. My sincere thanks to all those members who have been involved in recent membership efforts, even with the pandemic, we were still able to welcome about 30 new members.

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# Conferences: Vision 2025 Florence



It is with great pleasure that we announce **Vision 2025**, the 14th International Conference of the International Society for Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation (ISLRR), which will take place in **Florence on 9-12 September 2025**.

We believe that Italy and in particular Florence, in many international rankings considered as among the

most beautiful cities in the world, can be the perfect venue for this important meeting that will be able to combine scientific innovation with traditionally unparalleled hospitality and climatic gentleness. The conference is organized as an interdisciplinary hub for the exchange of scientific advances, innovations and ideas among different professional components in order to address and contain the implications of vision impairment.

The conference is organized by three of the main Italian scientific entities involved in the study of low vision: the Low Vision Academy, PRISMA (Professionisti





Riabilitazione Ipovisione e Studio Malattie Associate), and the National Centre of Services and Research for the Prevention of Blindness and Rehabilitation of Visually Impaired.

The conference is sponsored by various entities, including the University of Florence, the Azienda Ospedaliera Meyer of Florence, IAPB Italia onlus, the Italian Union of the Blind and Visually Impaired, the European Society for Research and Rehabilitation of Low Vision (ESLRR), the Lions International Club, the Ophthalmology Clinic of the Fondazione Policlinico Universitario Agostino Gemelli IRCCS Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Rome, the University La Sapienza in Rome, the University of Verona, the Department of Neuroscience, Biomedicine and Movement, the National Research Centre Institute of Optics (CNR INO), and the Social Cooperative Yeah for the study of accessibility for the visually impaired. The conference is also supported by the Municipality of Florence, the Chamber of Commerce of Florence, and the Ministry of Tourism of the Region of Tuscany. The aim of the conference is to study ways to minimize the impact of visual impairment on daily independence. Low vision rehabilitation aims to improve the patient's residual visual abilities, maintain them over time, and facilitate perception and living in the environment. The use of the traditional or innovative aids, appropriate training, social and psychological support are just some of the strategies used to achieve this goal. The conference also aims to assess the possibility of improving the clinical condition of the visually impaired within the visual process, for example, by improving fixation stability, retina-brain cortex connections, or awakening silent neuro-retinal cells. A particular attention will be given to subjects in the evolutionary age.

Space will be given to sharing experiences from different Countries and a focus will be dedicated to training in order to ensure accessibility to services for vision rehabilitation in all Countries of the World.

During the conference, there will be a plenary session in the morning and one in the afternoon, with the main topics introduced by a keynote lecture. Before and after each plenary session, countless topics will be explored in 6 parallel lecture halls, with up to 24 different topics. Topics will include cell therapy, diagnostics and gene therapy, the use of artificial intelligence, strategies for proper visual rehabilitation, and strategies to compensate for vision loss. In addition, there will be extra-congress visits to the Carlo Monti Visually Impaired Centre, the Guide Dog School in Scandicci, the Uffizi Gallery, and the Braille Printworks. Finally, the "Dark on the Road" route will be available to encourage greater knowledge and understanding of visual impairment through an immersive experience.

We hope to meet you all in Florence in 2025, save the date!

Paolo G. Limoli

*LOC President and Low Vision Academy Scientific Coordinator*



## Feature

# *Development of International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) core set for vision health*



Would you like to contribute to more efficient care for people with vision loss?

The World Health Organization (WHO) developed the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) as an international framework to identify and measure disability and health.

Although the ICF has core sets for a variety of health conditions, there are still some conditions that need to be addressed. A core set tries to map the factors that influence quality of life and describes what is relevant to functioning.

Lorenzo Billiet and his team decided to develop an evidence-based ICF core set for vision loss in adults and the elderly.

How a person experiences vision loss varies depending on personal and environmental factors and will be interpreted differently for everyone. It will negatively affect the degree of independence, the ability to participate in daily life, and the quality of life. In addition, this target group has an increased risk of social isolation, depression and falls.



That is why we would like to gain more insight through you!

To map the perspective of health care professionals we conducted an online survey.

Filling in the questionnaire takes about 20 minutes and involves information about your demographic situation and a few open questions.

The survey can be completed via this link:

<https://lowvisionresearchamsterdam.com/vragenlijsten/icf-core-set-english/>

The data entered will be processed anonymously and cannot be linked to you as a person. We don't ask you for your name.

However, if you leave your email address at the end of the survey, you will have the chance to win one of the Amazon vouchers of 25 USD!

If you know someone who would like to collaborate, then please forward this email. The more people who complete the survey, the more accurate the results will be, and the better the core set can respond to the needs of people with vision loss all over the globe.

We also hope to receive input from persons with vision loss as well. This is also by an online questionnaire, in English, French, Spanish, Dutch, (Turkish and Arabic will follow as of April 19, 2023).

Persons with vision loss can participate by clicking on

this [link](https://forms.gle/5wTxs7LEngpLrduB6): <https://forms.gle/5wTxs7LEngpLrduB6>

Do you have any questions or do you want to receive additional information? Send an email to Lorenzo Billiet: [l.billiet@amsterdamumc.nl](mailto:l.billiet@amsterdamumc.nl) (PhD candidate) or Ruth van Nispen: [r.vannispen@amsterdamumc.nl](mailto:r.vannispen@amsterdamumc.nl) (Professor of Ophthalmology).

# Opportunities



We are very pleased and excited to announce that the Visual Impairment & Rehabilitation option in Low Vision as well as Orientation & Mobility in the [Master of Vision Science](#) program at the *Université de Montréal* have been fully accredited by the [Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and](#)

[Visually Impaired](#).

These programs, offered in both English and French by the School of Optometry at the Université de Montréal, are designed to train professionals who provide rehabilitation services to people of all ages who are blind or who have low vision.

There are three concentrations (or tracks) in the program, enabling one to specialize in Low Vision (sight enhancement), Orientation & Mobility, or Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (sight substitution). Each concentration is composed of three (3) segments: a 15-credit core segment, common to all 3 concentrations, a 23-credit specialty-area segment, consisting of courses and internships, and a 7-credit research segment. It should be possible for a student to complete the program in 16 months although two full academic years are allowed, if necessary.

Please note that the accreditation of the Vision Rehabilitation Therapy, as well as the French versions of the programs, is planned for the near future. Applications to any of the three tracks are accepted each year by February 1<sup>st</sup>, for admission the following September.

Availability of each track depends on the number of applications. You can find out more about the application process, admission requirements, program structure, and available fellowship support on the [program webpage](#).