

## Abstract

**BACKGROUND:** After the U. S. Embassy bombing in 1998 in Nairobi, Kenya, a relief operation was immediately initiated by the Department of Ophthalmology of the Ludwig Maximilians University (LMU) Munich, Germany. Surgical devices and material (such as a vitrectomy unit, silicon oil, perfluorodecalin, intraocular lenses, sutures) were supplied to operate on 42 ocular-injured victims of this bombing attack. Apart from these specific operations in Kenya, there is a big need for vitreoretinal surgery in East Africa, as in all other developing countries. Therefore, a vitreoretinal training program was started in 2000 in Nairobi, Kenya. We report about the first 7 years of collaboration between the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich, Germany and the University of Nairobi in cooperation with the Kenyatta National Hospital, Kenya. **MATERIAL AND METHODS:** The training program was based on an annual project week in which the author (CLS) carried out vitreoretinal surgery himself and assisted and supervised surgery done by the local Kenyan colleagues at the Kenyatta National Hospital. Within the observation period of the present work (2000 - 2006) the following data were collected: number and kind of surgery, indications, surgeons, grading of eye pathology and the surgical procedure, time to prepare for surgery and duration of surgery. **RESULTS:** In total, 293 vitreoretinal surgeries were performed during the observation period. Surgeries carried out by the local Kenyan colleagues independently, without intervention of the author, increased from 29.4 % (2000) to 78.6 % (2006). Due to a constant development in the learning process during the project week more severe cases were treated and preparation time for surgery from the nursing side has shortened. **CONCLUSIONS:** By initiating a project week with high frequency surgery, supported by a highly experienced visiting surgeon, vitreoretinal surgery can be successfully set up in an ophthalmic clinic of a developing country. This approach has some advantages when compared to long-period projects, especially for the purposes of sustainability. However, to be successful it requires systematic planning which is described in this article.