

# AER Participates at World Health Organization International Consensus Conference

In December 2015, over 60 experts representing all the regions of the World Health Organization (WHO) gathered in Rome, Italy, for the WHO International Consensus Conference (WHO-ICC) to discuss vision rehabilitation services in national healthcare systems. Currently, there are no international standards of care for vision rehabilitation services. Former AER President John Kelly represented the association. Also at the meeting was AER member Kay Ferrell, who represented the International Council on Education of Persons with Visual Impairments.

In 2013 WHO approved an action plan to reduce avoidable visual impairments by 25% by 2019. The organization has found that globally, 80% of all visual impairment can be prevented or cured; the challenge is educating the public about eye health and improving access to rehabilitative services. The WHO-ICC was one of many efforts toward achieving the action plan's goals. The meeting was hosted by the National Centre for Services and Research for the Prevention of Blindness and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired, which is a WHO Collaborating Center for the Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired.

For four days, participants worked to develop minimum standards and indicators for vision rehabilitation worldwide. The meeting also included reports from each WHO region on the state of vision rehabilitation services in their member countries. The WHO regions are Africa, the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, South-East Asia and the Western Pacific.

“We assisted the WHO in drafting standards that will be used to provide governments world-wide a baseline expectation of care in the medical, rehabilitative and academic realm,” said Kelly. “My role was to help them understand the needs of children and young adults in areas such as functional vision assessment, literacy, braille and mobility. It was quite an honor to be selected.”



AER members Kay Ferrell and John Kelly at the WHO meeting in Rome, Italy



John Kelly with Dr. Silvio Paolo Mariotti, senior medical officer, WHO, Prevention of Blindness and Deafness Office, and Dr. Linda Lawrence, pediatric ophthalmologist, International Council of Ophthalmology and the American Academy of Ophthalmology