



## Community Vision Project: A Unique Hands on Training for Medical Students at Eye Camps

Since its first eye camp 2009, the Community Vision Project has run over 40 mobile eye camps throughout the state (from Alamogordo to Shiprock and just about everywhere in between) and seen close to 1000 patients. Each year the project trains up to 20 first year students in a skill set that would have otherwise eluded them.

Students develop practical real world knowledge about basic eye diseases like cataracts and diabetic eye diseases. “They develop proficiency using highly technical equipment that is never acquired by most medical school graduates unless they are pursuing ophthalmology as a career”, remarks **Linda Rose, MD, PhD**, Associate Professor and Director of Cornea Service who has been running this program from its inception. The project does this by providing student training in the context of a community service.

In a typical eye camp, students do a history and exam on patients, autorefract, and dilate their eyes to detect common eye problems under the supervision of Dr. Rose. In case of refractive error, they dispense glasses free of charge to those who need them. Complex eye cases are referred to specialists at UNM for further management.

“The Community Vision Project gave me an unique exposure and perspective to ophthalmology”, says Adi Mehta, MD, an ex-student at UNM and currently a first year resident in Ophthalmology at the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX. “I fell in love with ophthalmology during those eye camps. It was an easy choice.”

The project came to be after its founding medical student, Dr. Michelle Longmire approached Dr. Rose about writing a "caring for the community" grant through the Association of American Medical Colleges, thus funding the equipment used in the eye camps. Their goal was to create an outreach program that would deliver basic eye care to New Mexico's underserved communities. In addition, the doctors trained therein, most of whom go into primary care, have had the opportunity to cultivate skills that will help them better understand eye diseases in the context of primary care.



**Linda Rose, MD, PhD**  
Associate Professor

***Doctors trained have had the opportunity to cultivate skills that will help them better understand eye diseases in the context of primary care.***