EXCHANGE PROGRAM  I.O.A.

After many years as an experienced Orthoptist and Assistant Ophthalmologist in various hospitals in Rome, I wanted to seize the moment to verify my capabilities in another working environment that would stimulate my experience and expertise in my field.

In lieu of the difficult moment for the medical profession and the general health care system presently in Italy, I felt it the right time to grasp the opportunity for this exchange program.

I fancied the thought of evaluating orthoptic tasks and duties in a different society and decided to apply to the international professional Exchange Program which offered me a one month’s opportunity to observe orthoptic functions in a large and qualified New York Hospital.

“The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary”, situated in the heart of Manhattan, is a specialized hospital which includes a Pediatric Ophthalmology/Orthoptic Department where the team could examine patients in seven separate rooms with excellent Orthoptists:

Director Sara Shippman C.O. and co-director Larisa Heiser C.O. and Margarita Mendy C.O.

The medical Directors who manage the Ophthalmological Surgery and Medicine are Dr. Hall MD and Dr. Rosenberg MD with eleven MDs specializing in Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus along with the same team of colleagues.
The Department hosted a sizable number of patients, who were initially examined by our colleagues; this exam include ocular motility evaluation and Refractometry/ Retinoscopy and then those cases are presented to the supervising medical coordinator, who daily discussed and planned the diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of each case with making a decision on what type glasses should be prescribed.

The rapport of exchange between Ophthalmologist and Orthoptists as well as collaboration and team work are the basis of our profession.

The organizational management system, the professional skills and the privacy that each patient was given was extremely impressive but unfortunately the Italian Divisions do not even compare with the daily work force experienced in the New York Hospital. The rare cases of low birth rate and school screening have diminished cases of strabismus in Italy.

On the other hand, in America’s multiethnic society there is a larger range of pathologies treated with respect to Italy which necessitates the application of the orthoptic techniques at a deeper level.

It is highly due and in full keeping to thank our American colleagues who professionally host me and who sustain the exchange program with their on-the-job training, encouragement and precious informational input adding greatly to our growth and self awareness.

Donatella D’Arce