

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



*Tissue Banks International*

## **Baltimore-Based Tissue Banks International Touches Lives Half a World Away** *Non-Profit Donates Eye Tissue Used to Restore Vision to Six Iraqi Children*

Baltimore, Md., 1.18.2007 – Baltimore-based **Tissue Banks International** donated corneas to **The Eye Birth Defects Research Foundation** in January that were used in cornea transplant surgery that restored vision to six Iraqi children.

From 14 months to 13 years of age, many of the children have suffered from vision impairment from birth. The children were treated in Amman, Jordan to ensure their safety and the safety of the surgeons providing them care.

“We are proud to be able to offer the opportunity of restored sight to children whose lives may be hard enough without the added burden of corneal blindness. TBI’s mission is to relieve human suffering around the world through transplantation - and although a cornea transplant may be considered a minor surgery for many, for these children, it is truly a miracle,” said TBI President and CEO Gerald J. Cole.

The surgeries were performed by Dr. Batool Jafri, an ophthalmologist with Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles affiliated with the Eye Birth Defects Research Foundation.

“Quote from Dr. Jafri about his experience”

TBI provides more than 200 ocular tissues each year with no associated processing fees to low-income patients, and approximately two-thirds of these tissues are utilized overseas in medically underserved countries with low cornea availability.

According to the World Health Organization, nearly nine million people around the world suffer from corneal blindness and an additional four million suffer from impaired vision due to corneal conditions.

Primary among the ocular tissues recovered by TBI eye banks is the cornea, the clear piece of tissue at the front of the eye. When damaged by disease, trauma or inherited condition, loss of sight can occur. Corneal blindness is one of the reversible forms of blindness. In the transplant procedure, a skilled surgeon removes the damaged cornea and replaces it with a cornea donated to an eye bank.

**About TBI:**

Non-profit TBI/Tissue Banks International, founded as a single eye bank in 1962, today is a far-reaching network of associated eye and tissue banks throughout the United States and across the globe. Providing nearly 10,000 corneas annually, TBI is the largest singular provider of ocular tissue in the world. For additional information visit TBI's website: [www.tbionline.org](http://www.tbionline.org).

**About Eye Birth Defects Research Foundation:**

The mission of the Foundation is to support both molecular genetic and surgical research into birth defects of the cornea and the anterior segment of the eye which, if left untreated, can result in permanent blindness. The foundation is also committed to supporting the surgical treatment of the financially disadvantaged who require cornea transplantation. The Foundation operates with support from the Cedars Sinai Medical Center.

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