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Biography

Blake Snyder, is a Global Ophthalmology Fellow at Stanford University with extensive training in ophthalmology, uveitis, and medical cornea. He graduated summa cum laude from the University of Colorado and has conducted international ophthalmology research with UCSF's Francis I. Proctor Foundation. His work has contributed to global eye health initiatives and policy advancements in corneal donation access. His clinical and research interests focus on global ophthalmology and improving eye care worldwide

Storytelling to Cure Blindness: Early Successes and Lessons in Expanding Vision Science Awareness, Training, and Engagement

Abstract:

Background: Preventable blindness remains one of the most solvable global health inequities, yet public awareness, trainee engagement, and philanthropic participation remain disproportionately low. At the same time, digital creators have demonstrated an unprecedented ability to mobilize global attention for humanitarian work. Notably, large-scale digital storytelling models—such as those pioneered by creators like Mr. Beast, whose philanthropic videos reach hundreds of millions of viewers and directly translate into measurable health and social-impact outcomes—have reshaped the landscape of public engagement. These models demonstrate that ethically crafted, emotionally resonant short-form content can influence behavior, expand donor bases, and elevate global health issues at a scale previously impossible. Building on this framework, we created the "Storytelling to Cure Blindness" digital implementation lab to test whether structured, ethical storytelling can accelerate global ophthalmology engagement, increase awareness, and strengthen training and philanthropic pathways.

Methods: A collaborative team of trainees and partners across Stanford, Nepal, India, Thailand, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and Ethiopia produces short-form content focused on real patient narratives, surgical outreach, uveitis care, and trainee experiences. Ethical storytelling standards guide all production. Analytics are collected continuously across platforms. RCT-style A/B segmentation with industry partners is under development to test differential impact of narrative styles on audience engagement, training inquiries, and donor activity.

Results: Since launch, the initiative has demonstrated 100% week-over-week follower growth, with 22,419 cumulative views across posts. Audience reach generated through educational anatomy content (Figure 1) has been significant. The emotional impact of restored functional vision (Figure 2) has been a key driver of engagement. Early collaborations with the Byers

Eye Institute at Stanford (Figure 3) and U.S. regional coverage (Figure 4) have led to confirmed resharing and institutional

amplification. Early collaborations also include the American Academy of Ophthalmology (Figure 5). Additional results include rapid international media engagement (Figure 6). Active partnership development with Fred Hollows Foundation, Helen Keller International, and National Geographic is underway. Early downstream outcomes include trainee recruitment inquiries, NGO collaboration requests, and donor engagement directly linked to content.

Conclusions: Digital storytelling, when implemented through a structured lab model, can expand visibility of vision science, accelerate training interest, and generate meaningful global engagement. This framework demonstrates a scalable approach to aligning clinical care, global health, and public storytelling to strengthen impact and reach.