

The **Swedish Association** of the Visually Impaired bestows the **2020 Eye Care Award** for significant contributions

In connection with World Sight Day on October 8, the Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired presented the 2020 Eye Care Award to Associate Professor Inger Berndtsson at the Department of Education and Special Education, University of Gothenburg and to Professor Neil Lagali at the Department of Biomedical and Clinical Sciences, Linköping University.

Vision Rehabilitation is Key

Inger Berndtsson has designed theoretical foundations for rehabilitation in the field of vision. She has also developed several Master's education programs in collaboration with the Department of Optometry, Radiography and Lighting Design, University of Southeast Norway.



Inger Berndtsson has seriously deepened our knowledge of the consequences of visual impairment and identified important factors for a successful rehabilitation

... said Håkan Thomsson, Chairman of the Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired, when he presented the award. Berndtsson is pleased that this year's Eye Care Award draws attention to the fact that vision is part of the special education field. According to her, special education, optometry, rehabilitation and ophthalmology should be present side by side in vision rehabilitation.

In her research, Berndtsson has emphasized that rehabilitation efforts must be based on the patient's own experiences. Rehabilitation can never be the same for everyone who loses their eyesight. She has also been a driving force in attracting more young people to further their education in the field of vision rehabilitation.

Bringing a Rare Eye Disease into the Spotlight



With competence, commitment and humility, Neil Lagali has managed to focus on rare eye diseases

... stated Håkan Thomsson when presenting the Eye Care award to Neil Lagali.

Neil Lagali is researching diseases of the cornea at a basic level and clinically. He is praised for having created the conditions for visually impaired persons with the eye disease aniridia to meet others throughout Europe with the same diagnosis, and promoting a dialogue



Professor Neil Lagali and Associate Professor Inger Berndtsson are this year's Eye Care Award winners.
Photo: Ulrik Svedin, Linköping University, and Sofia Andersson, Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired.

between those living with aniridia, eye researchers and ophthalmologists. Research involving the social challenges of visually impaired persons and opportunities for an active life is also a major focus within the European network Neil Lagali is leading.

Neil Lagali meets many people with aniridia, their families and children. He finds the dialogue between patient groups, clinical experts and researchers very rewarding. Those who live with a rare disease feel less isolated when they meet others, and at the same time the profession is inspired to collaborate on the most challenging issues.

Acknowledgement:

Åsa Nilsson, Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired ■

The Eye Care Award by the Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired

- The Eye Care Award is an incentive award established in 1992.
- It is awarded to researchers and other professionals who have made:
 - significant contributions to Swedish eye care, rehabilitation and habilitation
 - demonstrated commitment and understanding for people with visual impairment and their life situation.
- The jury includes members of the Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired, the Swedish Ophthalmological Association, the Swedish Opticians' Association and Association for Rehabilitation of Visually Impaired Sweden.
- The prize money of SEK 100,000 is shared by the two prize winners.