



Setting expectations

We will do our best to supply the number of corneas requested. Sometimes tissue availability for gratis tissue on the exact day you need it is a challenge, and obviously, you cannot be flexible on the date you need the corneas. Many corneas are perfectly fine yet discarded right on the edge of what most surgeons and eye banks consider suitable for endothelial cell density (2000 ECD). Even at 1999 ECD – and well within the specular microscope’s margin of error – USA surgeons don’t usually use them. It is within EBAA and FDA requirements to release tissue for transplant even below 2000 ECD – the actual number is not regulated; it is dependent on the Medical Director’s discretion.

Last year LWVI supplied corneas for a multitude of mission trips. At times it was difficult to meet the requested quantity, so we have expanded our criteria to increase the supply to include corneas with <2,000 ECD. Even with an ECD between 1,700-2,000 the feedback was good; the surgeons were satisfied with the quality and the recipients were thrilled to receive a cornea.

You may want to consider ECD >2,000 for EK procedures, but please consider ECDs <2,000 for PKPs and DALK. If you are open to this, it expands the number of available corneas for your mission trip.