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t is my pleasure to update you on the developments in the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences in 2011, which continues to grow and succeed in every area of our mission.

Five years ago I established a clinician-scientist readiness program in the Department. This program provided protected research time and research support to faculty desiring a clinician-scientist career. The program was instrumental for three of our faculty in obtaining clinician-scientist awards from the National Institutes of Health (individual K awards). I am extremely pleased to announce that the Department received a five-year K12 award from the National Eye Institute last September to support the "UIC K12 Independent Clinical Scientist Development Program" and that three MD, PhD clinician scientists have joined this program! We are one of six Ophthalmology Departments in the nation to be actively supported by the K12 award. As a result of these efforts, the number of NIH-funded clinician-scientists in the Department has now grown from two to a total of nine over the past five years. These clinician-scientists are part of a group of 18 highly talented young faculty recruited during the past 5 years primarily at the assistant professor level. This group represents the future leadership of the Department, contributing to its continued growth into a world class ophthalmological institute.

Over the past five years, the clinical facilities have seen continual growth and renovations. We have expanded and renovated the Retina, Cornea, Contact Lens, Glaucoma, General Eye, Oculoplastic Surgery, and Neuro-Ophthalmology Services. This year, the Pediatric Ophthalmology and Adult Strabismus Service is being renovated. We have also established a Low Vision Service and a Comprehensive Ophthalmology Faculty Practice. The Millennium Park Eye Center, established in 2007, now provides clinical care in all ophthalmic specialties.

The educational mission of the department remains very strong. We established the Illinois Eye Review program in 2008 to coincide with the 150th celebrations of the Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary. This week-long review program is now in its fifth year and draws approximately 300 national and international participants every year. Additionally, the department has established a new exchange program with Brazil, which is modeled on our highly successful resident exchange program with Keio University in Japan.

Despite the challenges of limits on federal funding to the National Institutes of Health, our basic science research program remains very strong especially with the recruitment of Drs. Dingcai Cao and Jason McAnany, both Principal Investigators for National Eye Institute grants. The departmental core grant, of which I serve as the PI, was renewed through 2014. The Department also received a grant this year to provide a state-of-the-art animal facility dedicated to ophthalmology. Research to Prevent Blindness led the way in supporting our corneal, glaucoma and retinal research efforts. These grants, as well as other philanthropic support, have been critical in equipping the core research facilities with advanced cell and molecular biology technology, such as live-cell confocal microscopes.

In closing, I have tremendously enjoyed my tenure as Department Head and I am privileged to have contributed to the successes that the Department has achieved in recent years. Thanks to the generous support of our alumni and donors and the tireless effort of our faculty, residents, fellows and staff, the Department has strengthened its position as a leading ophthalmological institution. As I transition to the Dean’s office, we will continue to be guided by our institutional mission of academic excellence in education, translational research, serving the underserved and treating the most complex medical conditions.

Dimitri T. Azar, MD, MBA
Interim Dean, College of Medicine
B.A. Field Endowed Chair of Ophthalmologic Research
Professor and Department Head, Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences
Ahmad Aref, MD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
GLAUCOMA SERVICE

Dr. Aref is an Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology and an attending physician in the Glaucoma Service. His practice concentrates on minimally invasive glaucoma surgery for patients with mild to moderate glaucomatous disease, particularly those who are experiencing difficulties associated with a medical regimen and the management of glaucomas related to prior vitreoretinal surgical interventions. Dr. Aref joined the faculty in August 2011.

| Undergraduate | BS, University of Michigan |
| Medical School | MD, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine |
| Residency | Penn State Hershey Eye Center |
| Fellowship | Glaucoma, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute of the University of Miami School of Medicine |

Dingcai Cao, PhD
Associate Professor of Ophthalmology
DIRECTOR, VISUAL PERCEPTION LABORATORY

Dr. Cao joined the Ophthalmology faculty in September 2011 as a member of the research faculty. He is the principal investigator of a National Eye Institute research grant, Rod-cone Interactions in Mesopic Vision (R01EY1019651). Dr. Cao joins UIC from the University of Chicago, where he earned a PhD in Biopsychology and served on U of C’s ophthalmology faculty. Dr. Cao’s research focuses on finding what the neural mechanisms are that mediate visual processing, and how retinal diseases affect visual functions.

| Undergraduate | BS, Psychology, Beijing University |
| Graduate School | MS, Biopsychology, Beijing University MS, Statistics, University of Chicago |
| Doctorate | PhD, Biopsychology, University of Chicago |
| Fellowship | Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, University of Chicago, Laboratory of Dr. Joel Pokorny |
Iris Kassem, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
PEDIATRIC OPHTHALMOLOGY AND ADULT STRABISMUS SERVICE

Dr. Kassem is an Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology and an attending physician in the Pediatric Ophthalmology and Adult Strabismus Service. She specializes in amblyopia, pediatric cataracts and pediatric ocular trauma. Dr. Kassem completed her year-long Pediatric Ophthalmology and Adult Strabismus fellowship at UIC in July, before joining the faculty in September 2011.

Undergraduate  BS, Cornell University
Medical School  MD, SUNY Health Science Center at Stony Brook
Residency  North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System
Fellowship  Pediatric Ophthalmology and Adult Strabismus, UIC

Jason McAnany, PhD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
DIRECTOR, CLINICAL PSYCHOPHYSICS AND ELECTROPHYSIOLOGY LABORATORY

Dr. McAnany joined the Department of Ophthalmology in September 2011 as a member of the research faculty. He is the principal investigator of a National Eye Institute research grant, Mechanisms Limiting Visual Performance in Retinal Degenerations (R00EY019510). His research is focused on defining the relationship between visual dysfunction and the underlying disease processes using psychophysical, electrophysiological, and other noninvasive test procedures, with the goal of developing novel methods for diagnosing and monitoring the progression of visual dysfunction.

Undergraduate  BA, Psychology/Biology, Eastern Michigan University
Graduate School  MA, Psychology/Behavioral Neuroscience, UIC
Doctorate  PhD, Psychology/Behavioral Neuroscience, UIC
Fellowship  Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, UIC
Laboratory of Dr. Kenneth Alexander
FACULTY

Chairs and Vice Chairs

Dimitri Azar, MD, MBA
Interim Dean, College of Medicine
BA Field Endowed Chair of Ophthalmologic Research
Professor and Department Head of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences

Joel Sugar, MD
Professor of Ophthalmology
Vice Chair for Clinical Operations
Cornea Service

William Mieler, MD
Professor of Ophthalmology
Vice Chair for Education
Director, Ocular Oncology Clinic, Retina Service

Mahnaz Shahidi, PhD
Morton F. Goldberg MD Professor of Ophthalmology
Vice Chair for Research
Director, Applied Physics Laboratory

Professors

Kenneth Alexander, PhD
Professor Emeritus

Norman Blair, MD
Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Retinal Circulation and Metabolism Laboratory

Debra Goldstein, MD
Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Uveitis Service

Anthony Adams, MD
Adjunct Professor

Gerald Fishman, MD
Professor Emeritus

Nalin Kumar, DPhil
Professor of Ophthalmology

Jennifer Lim, MD
Marion Schenk Esq., Chair of Ophthalmology
Director, Retina Service

Irene Maumenee, MD
Research Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Ocular Genetics Laboratory

Timothy McMahon, OD
Professor of Ophthalmology

Marilyn Miller, MD
Professor of Ophthalmology

David Pepperberg, PhD
Seht-Schenk Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Photoreceptor Research Laboratory

Marilyn Miller, MD
Professor of Ophthalmology
Co-Director, Oculo-Plastic Surgery Service

Harris Rips, PhD, DSc
Professor Emeritus

Janet Szyk, PhD
Adjunct Professor

Howard Tessler, MD
Professor Emeritus

Jacob Winiarsky, MD
Professor of Ophthalmology

Beatrice Yue, PhD
Thanas A. Field Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Ocular Cell Biology Laboratory

Associate Professors

Nathalie Azar, MD
Associate Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology
Director, Pediatric Ophthalmology and Adult Strabismus

Dingcai Cao, PhD
Associate Professor of Ophthalmology

Ali Djallilian, MD
Associate Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Stem Cell Research Laboratory
Director of Medical Student Education in Ophthalmology

James Goodwin, MD
Associate Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Neuro-Ophthalmology Service

Charlotte Joslin, OD, PhD
Associate Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Contact lens Service

Paul Knepper, MD, PhD
Research Scientist

Michael Shapiro, MD
Clinical Associate Professor

Deepak Shukla, PhD
Marion Schenk Esq., Professor of Ophthalmology
Associate Professor of Microbiology and Immunology
Director, Ocular Virology Laboratory

Joan Steimack, OD
Clinical Associate Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Low Vision Service

Benjamin Ticho, MD
Clinical Associate Professor

Elmer Tu, MD
Associate Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology
Director, Cornea Service

Marlos Viana, PhD
Associate Professor of Biostatistics in Ophthalmology
Associate Professor, College of Pharmacy

Assistant Professors

Amjad Ahmad, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Ahmad Aref, MD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Victoria Butcko, OD
Clinical Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Jin-Hong Chang, PhD
Research Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Angiogenesis Research Laboratory

Qing Chang, MD, PhD
Research Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Felix Chau, MD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Retinal Biomechanics Laboratory

Soledad Cortina, MD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Comprehensive Eye Service and General Eye Service

Kimberlee Curnyn, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor

Jose de la Cruz, MD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Millennium Park Eye Center

Anthony Finder, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Robert Fitzgerald, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Molly Gilbert, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Retinal Neuro-Ophthalmology Laboratory

Michael Grassi, MD
Research Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Retinal Chemical Genomics Laboratory

Anil Gulati, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor

Kyuyeon Han, PhD
Research Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

David Hillman, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Sandeep Jain, MD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Neuro-Ophthalmology Laboratory

Iris Kassem, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Alexander Khammar, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Charles Kinnaird, OD
Clinical Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Yannick Leiderman, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Retinal Research Laboratory

Amy Lin, MD
Assistant Professor of Pathology
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Ophthalmic Pathology Laboratory

Mark Lunde, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director of Resident Education, Jesse Brown Veterans Administration

Jason McAnany, PhD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Heather Moss, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Neuro-Ophthalmology Research Program

Nasser Qtaishat, PhD
Research Assistant Professor

Pete Setabutr, MD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Oculoplastic Surgery Service

Ellen Shorter, OD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, PMOE Clinic

Asha Traish, MD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Associate Director,/Residency Program
Director, Pediatric Cornea Clinic

Larry Ulanski, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology

Thasarat Vajarant, MD
Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, Glaucoma Service

Minhua Wang, MD, PhD
Research Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology


Book Chapters


ARVO Meeting Abstracts April 22, 2011


Hsi CY, Leal SM, Booton GC, Joslin CE, Cianciotto NP, Tu EEY, Pearlman EA. Acanthamoeba keratitis is exacerbated in the presence of intracellular legionella pneumophilia. ARVO Meeting Abstracts 2011:52:5794.


Kinnan DF, Chow CC, Singh R, Ulanisky LJ, Lim JJ, Blair NP, Mieler WF. Subsequent intravitreal triamcinolone is an effective treatment for i-125 plaque-associated retinopathy recalcitrant to intravitreal bevacizumab. ARVO Meeting Abstracts 2011:52:2105.


Knighton EA, Zeltski RK, Roberts DK, Willensky JT. Kutzak JR. Rate of increase in lens thickness decreases with age. ARVO Meeting Abstracts 2011:52:1540.


Shafiq MA, Gemeinhart RA, Yue BY, Djalilian AR. Development of an acellular human cornea to support the growth of corneal epithelial and stromal cells. ARVO Meeting Abstracts 2011:52:2396.


Thomas JG, Selner AN, Hetling JR. Exogenous currents delivered to the eye as a potential therapy. Computational model comparing two electrode geometries in rat. ARVO Meeting Abstracts 2011;52:1864.


Ying H, Qiu Y, Shen X, Shyam R, Yue BYJT. Establishment of inducible wild type and mutant myocilin-GFP expressing RGC5 cell lines. ARVO Meeting Abstracts 2011;52:4597.


Congratulations to Kenneth Alexander, PhD, Professor of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, who retired on November 15. Dr. Alexander leaves UIC with a legacy of important accomplishments in the three facets of academic life: teaching, research and service.

As an outstanding scientist, Dr. Alexander regards his greatest research achievement as clarifying the pathophysiology of inherited and acquired retinal diseases through research funded for 27 years by the National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health (NIH). The impressive list of papers he has authored (more than 120 original articles in peer-reviewed publications) is evidence of a career dedicated to improving patient care through research. Dr. Alexander’s interest in developing noninvasive tests for assessing visual function was fostered during his 30 years of collaboration at UIC with Gerald Fishman, MD, a world-renowned authority on retinal disorders who was formerly Director of the Electrophysiology Service in UIC’s Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, and currently serves as Director of the Pangere Center for Inherited Retinal Diseases at the Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired.

An important mentor for Dr. Alexander, as he pursued his PhD in Psychology at the University of Washington, was the late Davida Teller, PhD, a pioneer in the study of infant vision. He also conducted research as an NIH Postdoctoral Research Fellow under the mentorship of Ralph Norman Haber, PhD, a leader in the psychology of visual perception, at the Center for Visual Science, University of Rochester.

Dr. Alexander held a faculty appointment at the Illinois College of Optometry and also taught part-time at the Art Institute of Chicago and DePaul University before joining UIC in 1981 as a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1987 and to full Professor in 1994. In 2002 he was named the Marion H. Schenk, Esq. Professor of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. Dr. Alexander also held two adjunct appointments at UIC in the Department of Psychology and in the Department of Bioengineering, illustrating the multidisciplinary nature of his research.

Dr. Alexander has also been an exceptional mentor and teacher throughout his career, guiding the careers of eight postdoctoral fellows, among them Neal Peachey, PhD, Professor at the Cole Eye Institute; Janet Szlyk, PhD, Executive Director of the Chicago Lighthouse; and Jason McAnany, PhD, Assistant Professor in UIC’s Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. Dr. Alexander has been committed to academic service at UIC and throughout the vision science community. He is honored to have served as a regular member of the Biology of the Posterior Eye (BDPE) Study Section of the NIH and is proud of his leadership role in the Optical Society of America, including service as Chair of the Noninvasive Assessment of Visual Function Topical Meeting and Chair of the Division of Vision and Color.

Dr. Alexander is also a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi, a Fellow of the Optical Society of America, and an ARVO Silver Fellow.

(Standing): David Pepperberg, PhD; Nalin Kumar, DPhil; Deepak Shukla, PhD; (Seated): Beatrice Yue, PhD; Ken Alexander, PhD; and Mahnaz Shahidi, PhD
UIC RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS NEI K12 GRANT

Dr. Dimitri Azar to serve as Principal Investigator

The National Eye Institute (NEI) of the National Institutes of Health has awarded UIC a $2.5 million grant for the UIC-NEI K12 Independent Clinical Vision Scientist Development Program. The project began in September and will continue through August 2016 under the leadership of Dr. Dimitri Azar, principal investigator for the project. UIC’s first-ever “K12 class” includes three MD, PhDs: Dr. Heather Moss, Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology and Director of the Neuro-Ophthalmology Research Program; Dr. Yannek Leiderman, Director of the Retinal Bank Laboratory; and Dr. Iris Kassem, Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology in Pediatric Ophthalmology & Adult Strabismus Service.

UIC’s program has two goals: to establish a public university-public health agency partnership to train independent clinician vision scientists; and to provide scientific development, authentic mentorship and the professional development of the K12 scholars to ensure their transition to independence. Achievement of these goals will enable program scholars to become national leaders in vision health research, as well as the educators, mentors and role models for a new generation of vision health researchers.

HEATHER MOSS, MD, PhD

Dr. Moss is currently working on two projects as part of the K12 program. “I am continuing work that I started during my fellowship which demonstrated that vision is decreased in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS),” says Dr. Moss. “This is a devastating neurodegenerative disease not previously thought to affect the visual pathways. The primary aims of this project are to determine why vision is decreased and if this decrease affects vision-related quality of life.”

In addition, Dr. Moss is starting a new project focused on vision loss due to the swelling of the optic disc in patients with high intracranial pressure, known as papilledema. “The aim is to identify examination and imaging markers that can predict the trajectory of vision (improving or declining) in a given patient,” notes Dr. Moss.

Dr. Moss sees definite career benefits in participating in the K12 program. “The grant is valuable because it will fund part of my salary and therefore allow me to dedicate more time to research,” says Dr. Moss. “This is especially important at this stage when I am starting new research projects that are not yet funded. Having this grant will springboard the projects and my career forward towards independent funding.”

“One of the reasons we decided to pursue a K12 program was the growing number of faculty who benefited from our research resources to successfully apply for their own K awards: Sandeep Jain, Ali Djalilian, Charlotte Joslin and Deepak Shukla,” states Dr. Azar. “We realized that we have an exceptional environment for developing clinician scientists. Our proposal to NEI expanded on this strong foundation.”

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YANNEK LEIDERMAN, MD, PhD

As part of the K12 program, Dr. Leiderman is researching retinal detachment and new treatments for restoring patients’ vision. Retinal detachment is a separation of the light-sensing structures from the back of the eye, resulting in profound loss of vision. Microsurgical techniques are utilized to restore the retina to its normal location.

“The most significant impediment to restoring vision is scarring of the retina, or proliferative vitreoretinopathy (PVR),” says Dr. Leiderman. “My laboratory studies the chemical signals that promote the formation of scar tissue following retinal detachment and eye trauma. By identifying the chemical messengers that result in PVR, we hope to discover new targets for medications that will block scar formation, allowing for restoration of vision in the most severe cases of retinal detachment.”

Vitreoretinal surgeons employ microsurgical techniques to restore function to tissues and structures among the most delicate and complex in the human body. Continual progress in understanding the chemical signals that maintain and nourish the retina provides new opportunities for restoring function and maintaining vision following retinal detachment. “The K12 program at UIC allows me to harness developments in laboratory research for continued progress in the surgical and medical treatment of the most complex eye diseases,” states Dr. Leiderman.

Dr. Leiderman notes that the K12 grant provides the support necessary to pursue laboratory investigations, as well as a framework for mentoring and access to shared resources, which are critical to establishing a successful research program and transitioning to an independent investigator.

IRIS KASSEM, MD, PhD

In describing the pediatric eye research she is conducting as part of the K12 program, Dr. Kassem explains, “A child’s eyes are not simply a smaller version of an adult’s eyes. There are fundamental differences in the structure and healing of the pediatric eye, as well as the development of a child’s vision, that make them unique. I am interested in elucidating these differences in pediatric eye disease and disorders and applying them to the care of our patients.”

Dr. Kassem also stresses the important role that mentors play in the K12 program. “I will have a mentor who is a successful clinician scientist, which will help me to develop the skills I need to one day be able to make my own contributions to advancing science and clinical care in pediatric ophthalmology. The wealth of information and experience my mentor has, not only in the science and techniques, but also in how to develop a research plan and write successful publications and grant applications, makes the program invaluable to my career development.”

Dr. Kassem’s ultimate goal in the K12 program is to bridge the gap between basic science and medicine in pediatric eye care. “Developing a greater understanding of the mechanisms involved in pediatric eye problems will allow us to apply the knowledge to modify our therapies, which can improve patient outcomes,” says Dr. Kassem. “If a child has poor vision that goes uncorrected, it can result in a lifetime of visual impairment. Conversely, if you fix a child’s vision, it can positively impact them for their entire life. The grant gives me a great opportunity to apply both the basic science and clinical aspects of my training to discovering better ways to diagnose and treat the serious pediatric eye problems I see in my patients.”
## SPONSORED RESEARCH

### FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH

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Tissue Donors Change Four Young Lives Forever

The gift of sight gives patients a brighter future

Building on its success in treating young pediatric cornea patients, the Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary now offers a Pediatric Cornea Section, launched in July 2010 with the recruitment of Dr. Aisha Traish. She is joined by Dr. Iris Kassem, the newest addition to the Pediatric Ophthalmology and Adult Strabismus Service, headed by Dr. Nathalie Azar. The stories offered here are a sample of how young lives can be changed with the gift of cornea transplants.

Catherine was just a toddler when she began to have vision problems. “She started running into things,” recalls her mother, Crissie. “She couldn’t see the faces of other kids and didn’t even recognize her own sister.” Catherine also had difficulty identifying household objects, even though they were large and close by.

In September 2007, at the age of two years old, Catherine was examined by Dr. Sandeep Jain, Director of UIC’s Corneal Neurobiology Laboratory. Both of her corneas were cloudy, which explained her impaired vision. “Based on a slit lamp biomicroscopy examination, we diagnosed her as having Congenital Hereditary Endothelial Dystrophy (CHED),” notes Dr. Jain. In this condition, the cornea absorbs water due to the disease of the cells that line its back surface, causing the cornea to swell up and lose its transparency, thus impairing vision.

“Given that Catherine’s impaired vision was now affecting her development, the family consented to have us perform corneal transplantation in both eyes,” says Dr. Jain. The right eye was operated on in September 2008 and the left eye in January 2009.

Prior to surgery Catherine was barely able to see 20/200 during vision testing, indicating that her vision efficiency was just 20%. At her most recent visit she could see 20/30 with glasses, meaning that her vision is now at 90%.

Today Catherine is an active five year old. “She’s doing great,” says her mom Crissie. “She would have lost her sight without the organ/tissue donation. It has made a 100% difference in what her life would be. She’s a normal kid.”

Liliana first came to see Dr. Elmer Tu, Director of Cornea Service, as a second opinion referral when she was just two weeks old. She was born with Peters Anomaly, a disorder that causes central corneal clouding, often with an attachment of the lens to the back of the cornea. She was afflicted in both eyes and her parents had been told that she needed immediate corneal transplants. Corneal transplants, however, carry a high risk of rejection and failure in children.

“We were so happy with Dr. Tu,” exclaims Liliana’s mother, Kimberly. “We had seen four other cornea surgeons. But we chose UIC and Dr. Tu because it was the best fit for our family.”

At around six months, however, Liliana began to develop searching movements of the eye, indicating that her visual progress was slowing. Dr. Tu elected to remove a portion of the iris in her left eye in January 2006 to give her a new pupil in the area of clearest cornea. The iris in her right eye was operated on in September 2009.

“At the age of four her right eye appeared to improve enough anatomically that we started to consider corneal transplantation,” notes Dr. Tu. After much consultation, a corneal transplant was performed on Liliana in April 2010. “She has regained some function in this eye over the past year and is able to make out colors and images. Challenges still remain ahead for this eye, but so far she has done well,” says Dr. Tu. Adds mom Kimberly, “Dr. Tu cannot believe how great she is doing with the corneal transplant. Liliana can navigate spaces very well and can tell an eye chart from 10 feet away. We’re amazed at how well she is doing.”

Kimberly points out that she wasn’t a donor before Liliana’s experience, and didn’t think much about it when getting her driver’s license renewed. But she is a donor today. “Somebody helped my child and hopefully someday I can help someone else. A donation gave my daughter the opportunity to be able to see.”

Donovan was also born with Peters Anomaly, which affected both of his corneas, although the right eye was more severe.

“We waited for him to grow a little bit until he was two or three months old, and then tried a rotational corneal transplant in the right eye,” says Dr. Ali Djalilian, Director of the Stem Cell Research Laboratory. “This is where we take his own cornea and rotate it so the scar moves out of the center of the vision. We did this because we knew his chance of success with a regular corneal transplant would be very low.”

Unfortunately, the transplant did not work very long and within a few months it failed. At this point Dr. Djalilian asked Dr. Jose de la Cruz, Director of the Keratoprosthesis Program, to step in and he elected to perform an artificial cornea transplant in Donovan’s right eye when he was nine months old. This was very successful in helping to restore vision in the right eye, but recently Donovan required a second corneal transplant.

“Donovan is doing well,” says his mother Alicia. “He wouldn’t be able to see without the donor tissue. When you’re a donor, it opens up so many possibilities for families.”
Amaris developed what her pediatrician thought was a severe case of pink eye. When a cataract was discovered in her right eye, Amaris’ parents took her to see Dr. Debra Goldstein, Director of UIC’s Uveitis Service. Just shy of her fifth birthday, Amaris was diagnosed with chronic uveitis, an inflammation that Dr. Golstein described as being akin to “arthritis of the eye.” According to Amaris’ mother, Crystal, Dr. Goldstein explained that the uveitis was treatable but not curable, and would require Amaris to take several different types of medication daily.

“Dr. Goldstein did all she could to keep Amaris’ eyesight,” recalls Crystal. Dr. Goldstein did five of the six eye surgeries that Amaris has undergone, with the first surgery at age five on her right eye.

In 2009 Amaris was diagnosed with glaucoma. Dr. Goldstein referred Amaris to UIC’s Dr. Jacob Wilensky, Director of Glaucoma Service, who performed a shunt procedure in November 2009. During this operation Amaris received donated sclera (eye white) tissue. Until Amaris’ parents were contacted earlier this year to invite their daughter to appear in the Illinois Eye-Bank poster, they didn’t realize that Amaris had been a recipient of donor tissue.

As a result of her positive experience, Amaris has decided to write a book to spread the word about the importance of organ/tissue donation. She also reached out to her donor’s family with a poem titled The Gift of Sight, which reads in part:

“WITH MY EYES I CAN SEE
THIS MOST PRECIOUS GIFT
YOUR LOVED ONE GAVE TO ME
THEY DIDN’T KNOW ME FROM ANYONE ELSE
BUT WHAT THEY GAVE TO ME VALUES MORE THAN WEALTH”

Notes Crystal, “Amaris lost very little sight, but enough to be a voice and an advocate for a great cause.”

Today Amaris is a busy 12-year-old girl who is on her school’s honor roll and recently placed as a runner-up at the Miss Pre-Teen Chicago pageant, snagging the Most Photogenic award. Crystal points out that one day Amaris hopes to help someone else with an organ donation. “It’s a blessing to have people who are willing to donate,” says Crystal.

The efforts of the Illinois Eye Bank to encourage organ and tissue donation were instrumental in the lives of these four young people.

Young UIC patients (clockwise from top): Donovan, Catherine, Liliana and Amaris
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Marie E. Wilkinson, a generous donor to the Illinois Eye Fund since 1988 when she made her initial gift in memory of her late husband, Herbert Wilkinson, passed away this past June. She was 100 years old. Herbert passed away in June 1988.

Marie and Herbert Wilkinson were partners in life in every way, including their philanthropy. Herbert was a longtime executive with Abbott Laboratories, where he began his career in 1930. He was president and director of Abbott Laboratories. He retired in 1971 and then served as president of the Board of the Clara Abbott Foundation, and as vice president of the Abbott Laboratories Fund.

Marie and Herbert met in Cincinnati and moved to Chicago when he joined Abbott. They settled in Lake Forest in 1957 and had three children, Carol Keenan of Chicago, Janet W. (Thomas M.) Leopold of Winnetka, and the late Herbert S. Wilkinson, Jr. Marie also leaves two grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Herbert Wilkinson’s association with the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences started in the late 1980s as a patient. His philanthropy started soon afterwards, and he became deeply committed to the Department and its research and patient care programs. Upon his death, Marie continued Herbert’s devotion to the Department for another 25 years through continued philanthropy supporting a variety of research programs and equipment purchases.

Marie Wilkinson trained as a nurse and did part of her medical training in Appalachia. She was passionate about helping others and making a difference. As an avid gardener, she loved to see things grow and develop. Her desire to help others was demonstrated also by her volunteer activities with several organizations including her church, the First Presbyterian Church in Lake Forest, and the Boarder Babies program in Chicago.

According to Patricia Wager, former executive director of development at the University of Illinois Medical Center who worked with Mrs. Wilkinson since the late 1980s, "Helping people was a central part of Mrs. Wilkinson’s life. She demonstrated this wonderful quality through her contributions to the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences to support eye research for 25 years in memory of her husband. These gifts were instrumental in helping the researchers develop new treatments and cures for eye disease and blindness. The positive impact of Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson’s generosity is felt by patients now and in the future who will benefit from this research. Their legacy of helping lives on."

Among the research programs that received support from Mrs. Wilkinson’s generous donations to the Illinois Eye Fund are the Photoreceptor Research Laboratory directed by David Pepperberg, PhD, the Ocular Virology Research Laboratory directed by Deepak Shukla, PhD, and the Retinal Circulation and Metabolism Laboratory directed by Norman Blair, MD. Most recently, research funding has been provided to one of the Department’s young clinician scientists: Soledad Cortina, MD. Dr. Cortina’s research focuses on the study of corneal nerves and possible treatments that will speed corneal nerve recovery. In addition, Marie’s gifts made possible the acquisition of a state-of-the-art instrument to rapidly measure the concentration of proteins and other biomolecules in a variety of basic science experiments. FortéBio’s new Octet® RED96 System will foster new vision science discoveries.

“These are just a few examples of the important vision research activity that has been greatly aided by Marie Wilkinson’s generosity,” stated Dr. Dimitri Azar, Interim Dean of the College of Medicine, B.A. Field Endowed Chair of Ophthalmologic Research, and Professor and Head of the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. “Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson understood that research in vision and ophthalmology would improve the quality of care and quality of life for everyone suffering from vision loss or blindness, today and for generations to come. We are deeply indebted to them.”

The Illinois Eye Fund provides support for research, education and patient care in the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. The Department leads in the diagnosis, management, and treatment of the most serious and complicated ophthalmologic cases. To make a gift, go to www.uic.edu/com/eye/WaysToGive or call 312-996-6590.

In memory of our good and caring friend, MARIE E. WILKINSON
RENOVATIONS & INNOVATIONS

New cutting-edge equipment and renovated spaces benefit doctors and patients

A series of extensive renovations at the Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary has resulted in much-improved treatment spaces for both patients and doctors. Renovations completed in 2011 include welcoming new reception areas, the addition of high-tech diagnostic equipment, and patient amenities such as comfortable new furniture and flat screen TVs in waiting areas. According to Agustin Lopez-Scala, Assistant to the Head of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, patient care areas for the Cornea, Contact Lens and Glaucoma Services, and the new Comprehensive Ophthalmology Faculty Practice, all underwent renovation.

The biggest expansion occurred in the Glaucoma Service, which went from 10 to 15 rooms and relocated from the second to the third floor of the Infirmary building. Besides a new reception and waiting area, the Glaucoma Service now features seven rooms equipped with the new M&S Vision Testing System. This high-tech alternative to chart projectors is a computerized vision testing system that features a wide variety of charts, contrast sensitivity and multimedia functions. In addition, the Glaucoma Service now has two independent visual field testing rooms, a renovated technician suite and a new dedicated conference room.

“This renovation definitely benefits us all,” says Thasarat S. Vajaranant, MD, Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology and Director of Glaucoma Service. “It allows us to work more efficiently to deliver the best care. I personally received many positive comments from our patients.”

Other renovation highlights include the addition of four exams rooms in the Cornea Service. Each room is equipped with an M&S Vision Testing System. Contact Lens Service has relocated and has three new rooms, along with a special contact lens trial room outfitted with contact lenses and diagnostic equipment. The Comprehensive Ophthalmology Faculty Practice expanded from three to six exam rooms, plus a dedicated testing area. Each new room is equipped with the M&S Vision Testing System. Comprehensive Ophthalmology also has a new reception and waiting area.

“The additional space has allowed us to increase volume while maintaining excellent care,” notes Pete Setabutr, MD, Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology and Director of Oculoplastic Surgery. “The improvements in the waiting area provide a relaxed and comfortable area for our patients.”

Big plans for 2012 include the entire renovation of the Pediatric Ophthalmology & Adult Strabismus Service, located on the second floor of the Infirmary building. The project includes a new reception and waiting area, eight exam rooms, one visual testing room, and four other clinical and administrative rooms. Also, six rooms on the second floor of the Infirmary building will be converted to physicians’ offices. These new spaces will be home to doctors who have been hired within the past two years and have not had permanent offices.
INNOVATIONS

Exciting new cutting-edge equipment was installed in 2011, with more scheduled to be in place in the coming year. In 2011, the department acquired a new Trabectome® unit for the Glaucoma Service. This FDA-approved surgical device allows for minimally invasive treatment of glaucoma that decreases pressure in the eye and stabilizes vision. The outpatient Trabectome® surgical procedure can lower pressure into the mid-teens and reduce the patient’s reliance on glaucoma medications, without subjecting the eye to the risks of a more invasive trabeculectomy.

The department is currently in the process of acquiring a femtosecond laser system for use in cataract surgery. This is breakthrough technology originally approved for refractive surgery, including LASIK procedures. However, the FDA has now approved the use of the system to include “cuts” in the cornea, including vertical and lamellar cuts. The possibilities for use now include, but are not limited to, femtosecond keratoplasty, astigmatic keratoplasty, and Intacs for keratoconus.

The femtosecond laser differs from the traditional method of refractive surgery in a number of ways, using a near infrared light to create precise subsurface cuts. Traditionally, in refractive surgery ultraviolet light sources, such as the excimer laser, have been used for precise surface cuts on the cornea. These light sources were dependent on tissue properties to absorb the light. The femtosecond laser works independently of light tissue absorption, so photodisruption of deeper tissues is possible and the patient’s corneal anatomy (such as steepness, flatness or thickness of the cornea) does not interfere with the cuts. This leads to a more uniform treatment. In addition, femtosecond pulses are very short, of subpicosecond duration, which allows lower energy levels and aids in precision, decreasing collateral damage. The femtosecond laser system is expected to be ready to use by Ophthalmology’s surgeons, fellows and residents by June 2012.

Dr. Elmer Tu, Director of Cornea Service
Dr. Norma Allemann and Dr. Wallace Chamon, both on the Department of Ophthalmology faculty of the Federal University of São Paulo, Brazil, are Visiting Professors for the 2011-2012 academic year.

Dr. Allemann’s research and clinical expertise includes ultrasonography and optical coherence tomography for anatomic evaluation of ocular structures in different clinical and surgical situations. She is an expert in and teaches ultrasound biomicroscopy, anterior segment ultrasound, anterior segment optical coherence tomography, ultrasound and optical biometry, and ocular ultrasound, as well as refractive surgery techniques.

While at UIC, Dr. Allemann will be collaborating with the Azar research group on the Total Eye Transplantation research project. Dr. Allemann is also working with the Retina Service to expand and improve our ultrasound clinical services. At the Cornea Service she will collaborate with projects in imaging keratoprosthesis. Dr. Allemann notes that she will participate in the Illinois Eye Review, as well as help by submitting papers originating from her research at UIC.

Dr. Chamon practices, teaches and conducts research in the areas of restoring corneal transparency, myopia and public health, and therapeutics of refractive errors. During his visit, he will collaborate with Dr. Dimitri Azar, Dr. Pier Cristoforo Giulianotti and Dr. Enrico Benedetti on the Robotics in Ophthalmic Surgery project. He will also work on the Corneal Biomechanics and Finite Element Modeling project with Dr. Azar, Dr. Sandeep Jain, Dr. Jose de la Cruz and Dr. Craig Foster, Assistant Professor of UIC’s Civil & Materials Engineering Department. Additional projects include Corneal Nerve Regeneration and Excimer Laser Ablations; and Corneal Nerve Regeneration and Crosslinking, with Dr. Azar, Dr. Jain and Dr. de la Cruz. While at UIC, Dr. Chamon hopes “to learn from Dr. Azar how to academically address new advances and new technologies in ophthalmology,” as well as learn methods to improve teamwork in research. He also plans to secure an official agreement between UIC and the Federal University of São Paulo to establish a residency exchange program between ophthalmology departments that would begin in 2012.

Dr. Allemann trained at the Federal University of São Paulo where she earned a PhD and a Masters in Medicine in ophthalmology following her medical training, ophthalmology residency and two fellowships, one in external diseases and cornea and another in ocular ultrasound and refractive surgery. She also completed a research fellowship in 1992 under Dr. Jackson Coleman at Cornell University Medical College. Since 1998 she has acted as vice president of the American Society of Ophthalmic Ultrasound, a forum for the exchange of ideas and scientific discussion of ophthalmic ultrasound system design, microimaging, experimental applications, and the clinical practice of ophthalmic ultrasonography. She is also president and former scientific director of the Brazilian Society of Ecography in Ophthalmology. She will act as president for the 2012 SIDUO Meeting (Societas Internationalis Pro Diagnostica Ultrasonica in Ophthalmologia) in December 2012 that will be held in São Paulo, Brazil.

Dr. Chamon trained at the University of São Paulo in the city of Ribeirão Preto (medical training and ophthalmology residency), and earned a PhD and Masters in Medicine in ophthalmology at the Federal University of São Paulo following a fellowship in external diseases, cornea and refractive surgery. He completed a research fellowship in 1992 at Johns Hopkins University: Dr. Walter Stark served as his preceptor. Dr. Chamon is the current Coordinator of the Scientific Committee and former secretary of the Brazilian Council of Ophthalmology. He also is a scientific referee for Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science and, most recently, for the British Journal of Ophthalmology. He serves on the editorial board of the Journal of Refractive Surgery, and is editor-in-chief of the Brazilian Archives of Ophthalmology.

“Dr. Chamon and Dr. Allemann will contribute significantly to our research and clinical programs,” Dr. Azar states. “To continue as a top-ranked ophthalmology department we must continually renew our thinking and programs. The contributions of international leaders like Drs. Allemann and Chamon are critical to this process.”
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UPCOMING SYMPOSIA

MARCH 17-23, 2012
5th Annual Illinois Eye Review

MARCH 30, 2012
UIC Retina Symposium

APRIL 20-24, 2012
The American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery Symposium & Congress—in Chicago

MAY 16, 2012
Spring Glaucoma Symposium

JUNE 29, 2012
Alumni Day

SEPTEMBER 14, 2012
UIC Oculoplastics Symposium

NOVEMBER 10-13, 2012
American Academy of Ophthalmology Meeting—in Chicago

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