

Bascom Palmer Eye Institute | University of Miami Health System



Images

UHEALTH
VOLUME XL ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2022

Advancing
Frontiers in
Glaucoma Care

Vision Heroes in
the Emergency
Department

20 Years at #1

Bascom Palmer Eye Institute's mission is to enhance the quality of life by improving sight, preventing blindness, and advancing ophthalmic knowledge through compassionate patient care and innovative vision research.

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U.S. News & World Report




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Bascom Palmer Eye Institute
**Diana and John Clarkson
Lectureship on Advances in
Global Ophthalmic Education**

A Distinguished Lecture to Honor the Life and Work of Exceptional Ophthalmologists



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Kathleen and Stanley J. Glaser
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Celebrating Six Decades of Vision Leadership



Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Since our founding back in 1962, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute has been dedicated to finding and delivering the best possible vision care to our patients. Through the years, we have steadily expanded our research, clinical, and educational programs to support patients and families, find new treatments for blinding diseases, and train vision professionals from around the world.

Today, our Institute is a global leader in advancing our understanding of diseases of the cornea, retina, vitreous and optic nerve, including glaucoma, melanoma, orbital cancer, dry eye syndrome, and dozens of rare conditions affecting children and adults.

Every day, our researchers collaborate with our colleagues at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in fields like genetics and regenerative medicine, bringing leading-edge treatments to our patients. We also work closely with vision specialists around the world, sharing ideas and insights, and launching new laboratory and clinical research initiatives.

In this issue of *Images*, you can read about our team's latest advancements in diagnosing and treating glaucoma, one of the world's leading causes of blindness. Our scientists and clinicians are using powerful technologies to advance the frontiers of glaucoma care, including large-scale clinical databases, artificial intelligence (AI), advanced imaging technologies, and genetic studies.

We are also proud to salute the vision heroes in our Emergency Department, including our physicians, residents, fellows, nurses, technicians, and support staff. Every day, they treat traumatic injuries, infectious diseases, retinal detachments, and a wide range of other conditions. By prompt and effective treatment of vision emergencies, our team has been successful in preserving vision for thousands of patients a year from Florida, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

As we move into our 60th anniversary year, I would like to convey our gratitude to our philanthropic donors, companies, and foundations. Your financial support plays a vital role in advancing our mission of improving sight, preventing blindness, and advancing ophthalmic knowledge through compassionate patient care and innovative research. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Eduardo C. Alfonso, M.D.
Kathleen and Stanley J. Glaser Chair in Ophthalmology
Director, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute



Uncovering Glaucoma's Secrets

Bascom Palmer's researchers use new tools and strategies to advance treatments for global blinding disease

Dr. Steven Gedde

For more than five decades, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute has been a leader in developing better treatments for glaucoma, a blinding disease that still holds many secrets. Through the years, advances in medications and surgical procedures have succeeded in stabilizing or slowing the progression of vision loss in millions of glaucoma patients around the world.

Glaucoma often involves high levels of pressure inside the eye. The front part of the eye is filled with a clear fluid called aqueous humor that nourishes nearby tissues and then leaves the chamber through the trabecular network, a meshwork-like drainage system located in the "angle." Usually, the fluid flows smoothly through the trabecular network, keeping eye pressure at a normal level.

However, in open-angle glaucoma, the most common type, the eye drainage system does not work properly. Instead, the fluid builds up creating high intraocular pressure (IOP) that damages the sensitive optic nerve and results in gradual vision loss.

Now, Bascom Palmer's scientists and clinical researchers are using new tools and strategies to better understand the underlying nature of glaucoma in adult and pediatric patients. "The focus of our research

over the years has been finding therapies to improve patient care," said Richard K. Parrish, II, M.D., who leads Bascom Palmer's glaucoma service. A professor of ophthalmology and the Edward W. D. Norton Chair in Ophthalmology, he adds, "We have also trained hundreds of glaucoma specialists who share our vision and continue to educate the next generation of physicians."

Today, the Institute's researchers are using powerful 21st-century technologies to advance the frontiers of glaucoma care. "To understand the drivers of this disease, we are analyzing large-scale clinical databases, developing artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms, deploying advanced imaging technologies, and studying family genetics," said Parrish. "We are also carefully reviewing medications and surgical procedures to determine the most effective approach for individual patients."

Improving Glaucoma Surgeries

For decades, ophthalmic surgeons have performed a filtration procedure called a trabeculectomy to open an exit passage for the fluid inside the eye and lower the intraocular pressure that can damage the optic nerve in glaucoma patients. However, the body's natural healing



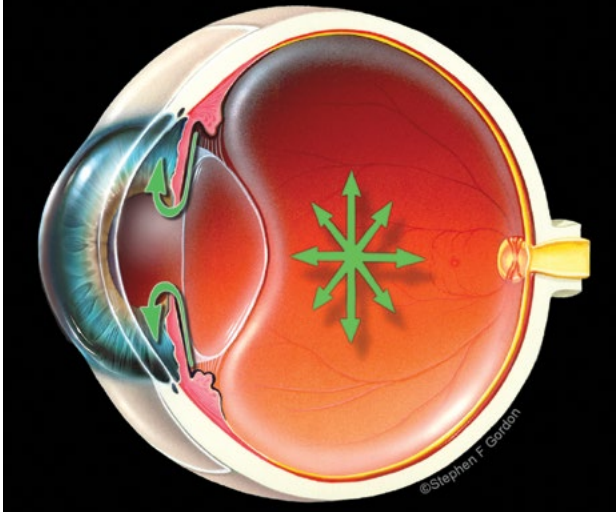
OPEN-ANGLE GLAUCOMA is the most common type of glaucoma. Increased resistance in the trabecular meshwork prevents proper drainage of aqueous humor. The continued inflow of the fluid raises the eye's intraocular pressure.



CLOSED-ANGLE GLAUCOMA involves blockage of aqueous humor outflow because the angle is closed, frequently causing a more sudden increase in eye pressure.

ELEVATED INTRAOCULAR PRESSURE AND GLAUCOMA

Impaired drainage of aqueous humor causes an increase in intraocular pressure, which damages the optic nerve in glaucoma.



“The focus of our research over the years has been finding therapies to improve patient care. We have also trained hundreds of glaucoma specialists who share our vision and continue to educate the next generation of physicians.”

– Dr. Richard Parrish

defenses sometimes close the passage. In the early 1980s, Parrish and biomedical engineer Jean-Marie Parel, Ph.D., Ing., ETS-G, director of the Institute’s Ophthalmic Biophysics Center, developed a system to insert a controlled-release drug called 5-fluorouracil (5-FU) following the trabeculectomy.

Parrish later took part in the National Eye Institute’s Fluorouracil Filtering Surgery Study, which showed that using 5-FU resulted in substantially higher success rates in terms of controlling intraocular pressure. He also co-chaired the Ocular Hypertension Treatment Study (OHTS) sponsored by the National Eye Institute of the National Institutes of Health (NEI/NIH). The results, published in 2002, indicated that eye drops used to treat elevated pressure inside the eye can be effective in delaying the onset of glaucoma. Parrish is now taking part in a 20-year follow-up study involving the OHTS participants scheduled for completion in 2022.

Tube Versus Trabeculectomy

Another study with worldwide impact on glaucoma care was co-chaired by Steven J. Gedde, M.D., professor of ophthalmology and the John G. Clarkson Chair in Ophthalmology, as well as Bascom Palmer’s vice chair for education. The “Tube Versus Trabeculectomy (TVT)” Study is a multicenter randomized clinical trial comparing the safety and efficacy of tube shunt surgery and trabeculectomy with mitomycin C in patients with prior ocular surgery.



Dr. Richard Parrish

“Our collaborative study found a higher success rate with the tube shunt surgery compared with trabeculectomy,” said Gedde in publishing the five-year findings in 2012. “That supported a shift in practice patterns toward the use of the tube shunts as an alternative to trabeculectomy.”

The outcomes of the TVT study prompted a second trial, the Primary Tube Versus Trabeculectomy (PTVT) Study, that enrolled glaucoma patients without prior ocular surgery. “Both tube shunt surgery and trabeculectomy with mitomycin C produced similar IOP

WHAT IS GLAUCOMA?

Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness that affects more than three million Americans. It is a family of more than 30 diseases that affects pressure within the eye and damages the optic nerve. Loss of sight from glaucoma can often be prevented with early treatment.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR GLAUCOMA?

Some people have a higher than normal risk of getting glaucoma. This includes people who:

- are over age 40
- have family members with glaucoma
- are of African, Hispanic, or Asian heritage
- have high eye pressure
- are farsighted or nearsighted
- have had an eye injury
- use long-term steroid medications
- have corneas that are thin in the center
- have thinning of the optic nerve
- have diabetes, migraines, high blood pressure, poor circulation of other health problems affecting the whole body.

Courtesy of American Academy of Ophthalmology

Regular Eye examinations by an ophthalmologist are the best way to detect glaucoma.

To schedule an appointment with a glaucoma specialist, please call 1-888-845-0002 or visit us online at bascompalmer.org

reduction and surgical success rates," said Gedde who presented the results at the 2021 meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO). "Prior to this study, tube shunts were reserved for the most challenging cases. Now, the findings suggest that tube shunts may be an appropriate choice in a wider patient population."

Normal-pressure Glaucoma

While therapeutic interventions for glaucoma typically focus on reducing intraocular pressure, the disease continues to progress in a subset of patients, despite adequate control of IOP. This suggests that other factors may play a role, such as impaired blood flow to the optic nerve, according to David S. Greenfield, M.D., professor of ophthalmology, Douglas R. Anderson Chair in Ophthalmology and vice chair for academic affairs. Greenfield served as a principal investigator for the multicenter randomized



NORMAL OPTIC NERVE AND FIELD OF VISION

Abnormal, increased pressure within the eye due to various mechanisms can damage the eye's optic nerve, resulting in loss of vision over time, and possible blindness.



"Low-pressure Glaucoma Treatment Study," and for the past three decades, his research has advanced the understanding and treatment of normal-pressure glaucoma.

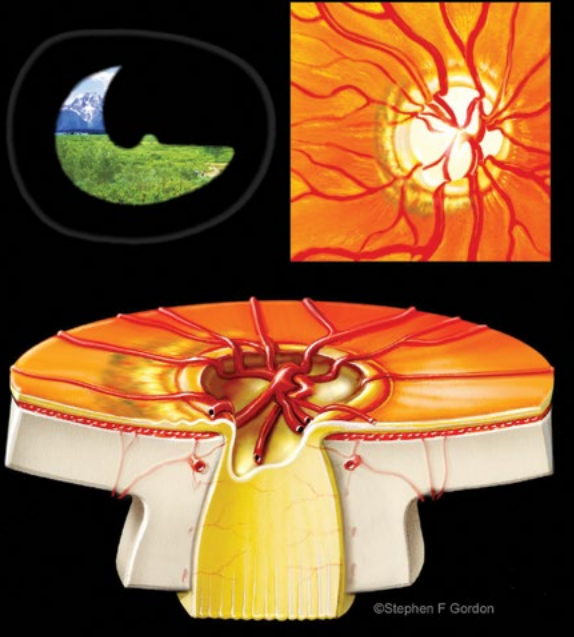
Greenfield is using optical coherence tomography angiography (OCTA) to examine the microvascular capillary networks with the optic nerve and retina of glaucoma patients. "The details of the relationship between ocular blood flow and glaucoma have remained a mystery for decades, in part due to technologic limitations of imaging technology," said Greenfield, who is principal investigator of the four-year Vascular Imaging in Glaucoma Study (VIGS), funded by philanthropic donors.

OCTA uses the motion of red blood cells as an intrinsic contrast agent to create reproducible images of microvascular networks rapidly and non-invasively. This non-invasive OCTA imaging can measure changes in capillary density in the central macula and regions around the optic nerve head that can lead to glaucoma. Patients in the study also wear a noninvasive device at home that records systolic and diastolic blood pressure and heart rate every 30 minutes over 24 hours.

Dr. David Greenfield

GLAUCOMA OPTIC NERVE AND FIELD OF VISION

Damage to the optic nerve usually causes loss of side vision first, followed by loss of critical central vision. Note cupping of the disc from increased pressure.



“We hope to gain insight as to why glaucoma progresses despite good intraocular pressure control. We believe that the data from this study will allow us to better understand the relationship between glaucoma and blood pressure,” said Greenfield.

“Blood pressure may represent a novel treatment target in patients with glaucoma. In addition, OCTA may prove to be a robust tool for predicting who develops glaucomatous vision loss.”

IRIS® Registry

One of the most exciting advances in glaucoma research is just getting underway, and once again, Bascom Palmer is at the forefront. In 2013, the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) launched the nation’s first comprehensive eye disease clinical registry. Now more than 15,700 ophthalmologists and other clinicians are voluntarily contributing de-identified data from patients’ electronic health records (EHRs) to the IRIS Registry, named for *Intelligent Research In Sight*. As of July 1, 2021, the IRIS Registry database contained more than 397 million visits for more than

69 million unique patients, according to Flora Lum, M.D., vice president, quality and data science, American Academy of Ophthalmology.

“Statistical analysis of the best treatments for glaucoma is essential because there is a wide variation in the severity of the disease and physicians use different therapies,” said



Dr. Elizabeth Vanner

biostatistician and scientist Elizabeth A. Vanner, Ph.D., Bascom Palmer’s director of biostatistics. “However, it takes extensive work to translate the data uploaded from providers, which is adequate for administrative purposes, into clinical data for research purposes.”

For instance, an electronic health record may indicate a visual field assessment was performed on a glaucoma patient, but not give the results. Or, the record might not indicate whether a certain medication was given to the right or left eye – a challenge for research since glaucoma may advance faster in one eye than the other.

“While there are shortcomings, the IRIS Registry opens the door to new types of research studies, including large-scale studies that require extensive computing power,” Vanner said. “Bascom Palmer is also fortunate to have a strong biostatistics department that receives grant support from our donors.”

Tapping the Power of the IRIS Registry

In 2018, Bascom Palmer launched its first study using the IRIS Registry. Vanner, who was awarded a 2018 Research to Prevent Blindness and AAO grant, along with senior biostatistician and scientist William Feuer, M.S., a leader in ophthalmology research, led that study, which compared real-world patient surgical data with the Tube Versus Trabeculectomy Study, to determine whether the TVT results could be replicated. Since then, Bascom Palmer’s researchers have been awarded grants for three more studies using the IRIS Registry data. Ta Chen Peter Chang, M.D., associate professor of clinical ophthalmology, recently completed an analysis of how well glaucoma patients’ eyes responded to laser trabeculoplasty (LTP), an alternative to surgical procedures to open a fluid drainage passage. That study, funded by a grant from the American



Dr. Ta Chen Peter Chang

“Having access to this nationwide (IRIS Registry) database gives us better information to guide our clinical decisions.”

– Dr. Ta Chen Peter Chang

Glaucoma Society, included results from 79,332 patients/eyes with primary open-angle glaucoma.

“We know that lasers can have a positive impact, but without access to the registry, it was difficult to determine the real-world impact,” said Chang, whose two papers from the study covered patient responsiveness to laser treatments and the duration of that response. “It was encouraging to see the results from the study matched our own clinical experience here at Bascom Palmer.”

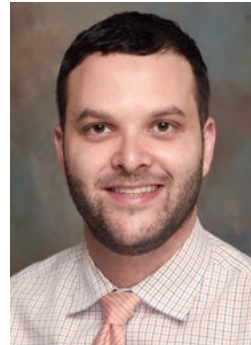
Chang said the study might help ophthalmologists decide whether to begin treating glaucoma with medi-

cations or to use an initial laser treatment to reduce IOP. “The study found that patients who were not on drops and responded to the laser treatment were able to remain medication-free for close to a year,” he said. “That indicates laser therapy is a very viable alternative, particularly for patients who may find it difficult to adhere to a medication regimen.”

Another important finding was that laser trabeculoplasty reduced the need for medications in patients with relatively normal eye pressure. Because clinical trials typically enroll patients with fairly high intraocular pressure, clinicians would not have known the potential benefits of laser treatments in this second group of patients without the IRIS Registry data. “Since it takes six to eight weeks for a laser treatment to be apparent, it is difficult for practitioners to make comparative assessments,” he added. “Having access to this nationwide database gives us better information to guide our clinical decisions.”

A third IRIS Registry study, “Change in Intraocular Pressure Following Stand-Alone Phacoemulsification,” is being led by Adam Rothman, M.D., assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology, who was awarded a 2020 Research to Prevent Blindness and AAO grant.

“My project involves investigating the change in eye pressure following cataract surgery,” Rothman said. “Cataracts and glaucoma are two leading causes of blindness worldwide and several prior studies suggest cataract surgery reduces eye pressure.”



Dr. Adam Rothman

Rothman’s project aims to validate the pressure reduction using more than five million eyes that had cataract surgery in the IRIS Registry. “We hope to identify characteristics that predict a greater likelihood of eye pressure reduction after cataract surgery as well as maintenance of that reduction for eyes both with and without glaucoma,” he said. “This information could help guide surgical decision making and management for glaucoma patients.”

More Leading-edge Studies

Along with exploring the possibilities of the IRIS Registry’s “big data” repository, Bascom Palmer researchers are also using other analytic tools, including artificial intelligence and genetic testing to try to solve the underlying mysteries of glaucoma.

In his laboratory, Richard K. Lee, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of ophthalmology, cell biology, and neuroscience, and the Walter G. Ross Distinguished Chair in Ophthalmic Research, is studying the processes involved in optic nerve degeneration and identifying molecular pathways in the optic nerve that are critical for maintaining vision. “There are proteins and pathways in the optic nerve that are critical for maintaining vision,” Lee said. “We hope to develop a model for protecting that nerve function from damage because that is easier than creating new pathways.” He is using advanced molecular genetic approaches to increase the visual signal processing within the retinal ganglion cells to improve their function in a process he terms “neuro-rejuvenation.”

If glaucoma is damaging the existing stressed cells in the eye, Lee is working to make them function vigorously again so they enhance the visual signals sent to the brain. “We are having good results in our experimental models,” he said. “We can deliver chemical compounds and use flashes of light to activate the retinal ganglion cells and build stronger connections with improved visual function.”

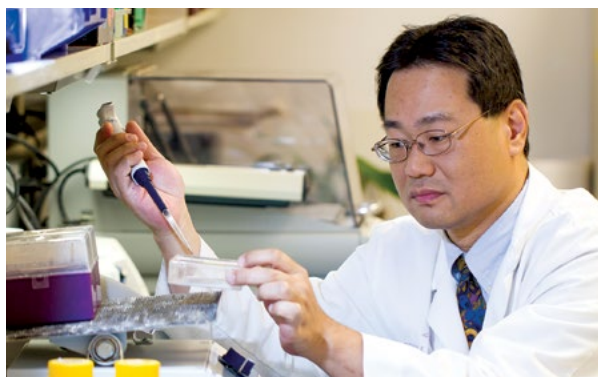
Lee also has a secondary appointment as an associate professor of electrical and computer engineering working with colleagues in the College of Engineering to devise new artificial intelligence algorithms using “Big Data” that improve the accuracy and ease of use for the patient of visual field tests for glaucoma. The goal is to develop a more accurate and sensitive test that allows clinicians to deliver therapies at an earlier stage of the disease and protect a patient’s vision.

Understanding family genetics could also provide fresh insights into glaucoma, according to Chang. He is an investigator on a Bascom Palmer research team that received a UM Scientific Awards Committee Pilot Grant and a Glaucoma Research Foundation Shaffer Grant for a collaborative study of primary open-angle glaucoma (POAG) in the Haitian community.

“POAG disproportionately affects Haitians, with an earlier age of diagnosis and more severe disease on presentation,” said Chang. Lee and Parrish were among the first to publish this observation based upon their community service work in Little Haiti, a neighborhood of Miami. “It is possible that reason may be due to one or more genes being overrepresented in the population due to Haiti’s relative geographic and cultural isolation.”

The researchers performed genetic analyses on a cohort of 60-plus Haitian individuals from about 20 families and discovered several rare genetic variants that may contribute to their disease. They then invited parents, siblings, and children of patients to come in for screenings and whole-genome sequencing. “We found that about one-third of these family members had real or suspected glaucoma,” said Chang. “That early diagnosis will allow them to start treatment, and hopefully achieve better control of the disease.”

Chang added that this project would also create a rich database that increases the diversity of glaucoma study populations, and provide the foundation for a personalized approach to glaucoma care for the Haitian community.



Dr. Richard Lee

Decades of Leadership

Treating glaucoma is a strength of Bascom Palmer. The Institute’s first glaucoma specialist and now Professor Emeritus Douglas R. Anderson, M.D., has been at the forefront of glaucoma research since the 1970s. He discovered that elevated intraocular pressure impairs axonal transport in the optic nerve that is affected by glaucoma. That seminal finding kicked off the development of effective therapies to reduce IOP and control the progression of the disease.

Professor Emeritus Paul F. Palmberg, M.D., Ph.D., coined the term “target pressure” and helped to clarify the relationship between the level of pressure in the eye and how well a glaucoma patient retains peripheral vision.

Through the years, the Institute’s clinicians and researchers have continued to make a lasting impact on glaucoma care. In fact, according to Gedde, 20 of the top 100 articles with the greatest impact on the clinical care of glaucoma patients were written or co-authored by current members of Bascom Palmer’s glaucoma service. This list of influential articles is now in press in the journal *Ophthalmology Glaucoma*. The list was compiled based upon the number of citations, and then reviewed by an expert panel as well as a survey of the American Glaucoma Society membership. “That shows how our glaucoma group has positively impacted the care of glaucoma patients,” Gedde said.

Looking ahead, Parrish added, “Bascom Palmer will continue to lead the way using data-driven, evidence-based analytic research. We believe we are on the threshold of discoveries that will shape the future of glaucoma care.”

“We believe we are on the threshold of discoveries that will shape the future of glaucoma care.”

– Dr. Richard Parrish

Saving a Child's Vision

Global Clinical and Research Leadership in Pediatric Glaucoma

Fourteen years after sight-saving surgery for pediatric glaucoma at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Rianna Patel is excelling in school, singing in the choir, and polishing her photography skills. "You would never know she almost lost her vision as a baby," said her mother, Sonal Patel.

When Rianna was born her left eye appeared completely gray. "We didn't know what was going on, but our doctor in Orlando told us that you needed to go to Bascom Palmer," said Sonal.



Dr. Alana Grajewski

Rianna was only two days old when Alana Grajewski, M.D., professor of clinical ophthalmology and director of the Samuel & Ethel Balkan International Pediatric Glaucoma Center, examined her eyes. "She had bilateral congenital glaucoma and her left eye was worse than her

right eye," said Grajewski. "Although this is an uncommon condition, we see many young patients like Rianna who need immediate treatment."

As first-time parents, the Patels had many questions about their daughter's vision and overall health. "Dr. Grajewski told us, there was a 50-50 chance she would be able to see, and we appreciated her honesty," said Sonal. "We talked many times over the next few days and I told Dr. Grajewski, 'I am giving you my child and I trust you will take care of her' – and she did."

Because Rianna was born a little bit early, the Patels needed to wait two weeks for her initial surgery. At that point, her intraocular pressure (IOP) was already very high, posing a clear threat to the optic nerve. "In one eye, the surgery was able to correct the glaucoma," said Grajewski. "In the other eye, she had to return a year later for another surgery. We later had to put in a glaucoma shunt to drain the fluid from her left eye."



A Hemispheric Referral Center

That expertise in treating young patients is one of the reasons Bascom Palmer is a hemispheric referral center for pediatric glaucoma, according to Richard K. Parrish, II, M.D., who directs Bascom Palmer's glaucoma service.

"With the right diagnosis and surgery, a child with glaucoma can be functionally cured. That allows the eyes to develop normally so a young patient like Rianna can maintain her vision throughout life," said Parrish.

The Balkan Center is also home to the Childhood Glaucoma Research Network (CGRN), a global consortium of clinicians and researchers who share their knowledge and insights to improve care for pediatric patients. "That collaboration is essential for improving care for pediatric glaucoma because it is an uncommon condition," said Parrish. "For instance, the CGRN developed an international classification system for this disease to help practitioners assess the severity in individual patients worldwide."

Currently, there are more than 240 members of the CGRN from 48 countries, said Grajewski. "We recently launched a new collaborative initiative through CGRN to address the quality of life for children and caregivers," she said. "That's such an important issue because parents and physicians have so many questions about caring for patients with pediatric glaucoma. Our next CGRN Kolokotronis Lecture: *Patients, Parents, and Providers* will focus on this important topic."

One of the missions of the Balkan Center is to produce clinical evidence to optimize care for young patients. "Our goal is to identify the risk factors associated with poor visual outcomes and surgical complications in pediatric patients who have

"We have created a warm, child-friendly environment at the Balkan Center, and integrated parental support into every aspect of our program."

– Dr. Alana Grajewski

undergone glaucoma surgery,” said Ta Chen Peter Chang, M.D., whose study, “Childhood Glaucoma Surgery: Does it Prevent Blindness?” is Bascom Palmer’s fourth IRIS Registry project since the national database was organized.

“This will be the largest study of its kind,” said Chang. “We expect the results will help physicians to select surgical procedures more judiciously and to optimize treatment outcomes for their patients.”

Integrated Care for Children

At the Balkan Center, Grajewski leads a multidisciplinary team that takes a compassionate, holistic approach to provide care for young glaucoma patients and their families. The center’s clinical team includes a geneticist and social worker, as well as experienced pediatric ophthalmologists and residents and fellows who are training in this specialty.

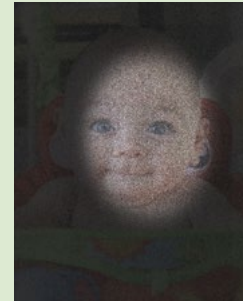
“We have created a warm, child-friendly environment at the Balkan Center, and integrated parental support into every aspect of our program,” Grajewski said. Using the center’s videoconferencing capabilities, she has organized online lectures, support groups, and clinical discussions for families, clinicians, and researchers around the world.

In the past year, Grajewski has also expanded the center’s telehealth services, including remote IOP monitoring devices, reducing the need for in-person checkups. For example, some teen-aged patients are now able to monitor their eye pressure at home using a small probe with a white bulb at the end that touches the eye and collects eye pressure. The probe beeps when it takes a reading and the information is then uploaded to the doctor’s office.

Thanks to her surgery and ongoing care, Rianna now has 20/20 vision in one eye and wears glasses to help the more limited vision in her other eye. Now a high school student in Winter Park, Rianna is planning a future career in psychiatry. “I have seen how my doctor and all the people at Bascom Palmer care for their patients,” she said. “Like them, I want to go out of my way to make others feel comfortable.” ■



normal vision



glaucoma vision
(simulated)

ABOUT PEDIATRIC GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma is a group of diseases characterized by damage to the optic nerve that often occurs when the eye pressure is too high. This causes optic nerve damage resulting in severe vision loss.

- It is estimated that about 10 percent of pediatric glaucoma cases are inherited. Recent research has identified specific gene mutations linked to this disease.
- The most common symptoms in infants with glaucoma include excessive tearing, light sensitivity, and a large, cloudy cornea that can cause the eye to appear hazy or dull.
- Older children with glaucoma tend to develop damage without any obvious symptoms, similar to adult glaucoma.
- Pediatric glaucoma is treated by lowering the intraocular pressure via medical or surgical means. Most cases of pediatric glaucoma are treated with surgery.
- Many children with pediatric glaucoma develop myopia (nearsightedness) and require glasses. Also, amblyopia (decreased vision) and strabismus (crossing or wandering eye) occur more frequently and may require treatment with patching or surgery.
- If infants born with glaucoma are treated promptly, they often have normal or near normal vision; if not, they are blind.

To schedule a visit with a Bascom Palmer specialist, please call 1-888-845-0002 or visit bascompalmer.org

SAVING VISION— When Every Minute Counts

Bascom Palmer's Emergency Department Delivers *Fast-Paced 24/7* Care

While a Miami man was hammering in his workshop, a metal splinter flew up into his eye. By the time he reached Bascom Palmer's Emergency Department (ED), his vision was almost gone. "A local doctor had told him the eye was lost because it was bleeding and had become infected," said Kenneth C. Fan, M.D., M.B.A., co-chief resident. "But our team has seen many injuries like this. We were able to save his eye and even restore his vision to 20/40. Helping patients with emergency blinding conditions is what keeps us going every day."



Chief residents, Drs. Diana Laura, Kenneth Fan

From traumatic injuries to life-threatening tumors, swollen blood vessels, viral infections, and unusual diseases, patients who need emergency eye care turn to Bascom Palmer Eye Institute – one of the few U.S. eye hospitals with a specialized emergency department. A unique medical resource for patients from throughout South Florida and beyond, the Emergency Department also provides exceptional training for ophthalmology residents, who learn surgical procedures and medical treatments for an exceptionally wide range of eye problems.

"The Emergency Department is a jewel for Bascom Palmer," said Kara Cavuoto, M.D., associate professor of clinical ophthalmology and director of the Emergency Department, which is located on the second floor of the Anne Bates Leach Eye Center - Bascom Palmer's Miami location on the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine campus. "We are open 24/7/365 and average over 75 patients a day – more than 25,000 each year."



Dr. Kara Cavuoto

The Emergency Department is a jewel for Bascom Palmer. We are open 24/7/365 and average over 75 patients a day – more than 25,000 each year.

— Dr. Kara Cavuoto

Eye emergencies range from infections to trauma, and if left untreated, can lead to visual loss of other health problems. Patients receive a diagnosis, care, and treatment of eye problems from a trained ophthalmic team of board-certified physicians, ophthalmologists pursuing subspecialty fellowship training, and ophthalmology residents who are supported by optometrists, registered nurses, ophthalmic technicians, and patient access staff.

“We are the gatekeepers,” said Fan. “We never know who is going to walk through our doors. It might be someone who lives nearby or a patient who has flown all night.”

Bascom Palmer’s faculty members are actively involved in delivering emergency care, including Richard K. Parrish, II, the Edward W. D. Norton Chair in Ophthalmology, and the director of Bascom Palmer’s glaucoma service. Parrish spends one day each month in the Emergency Department seeing patients and supervising residents.

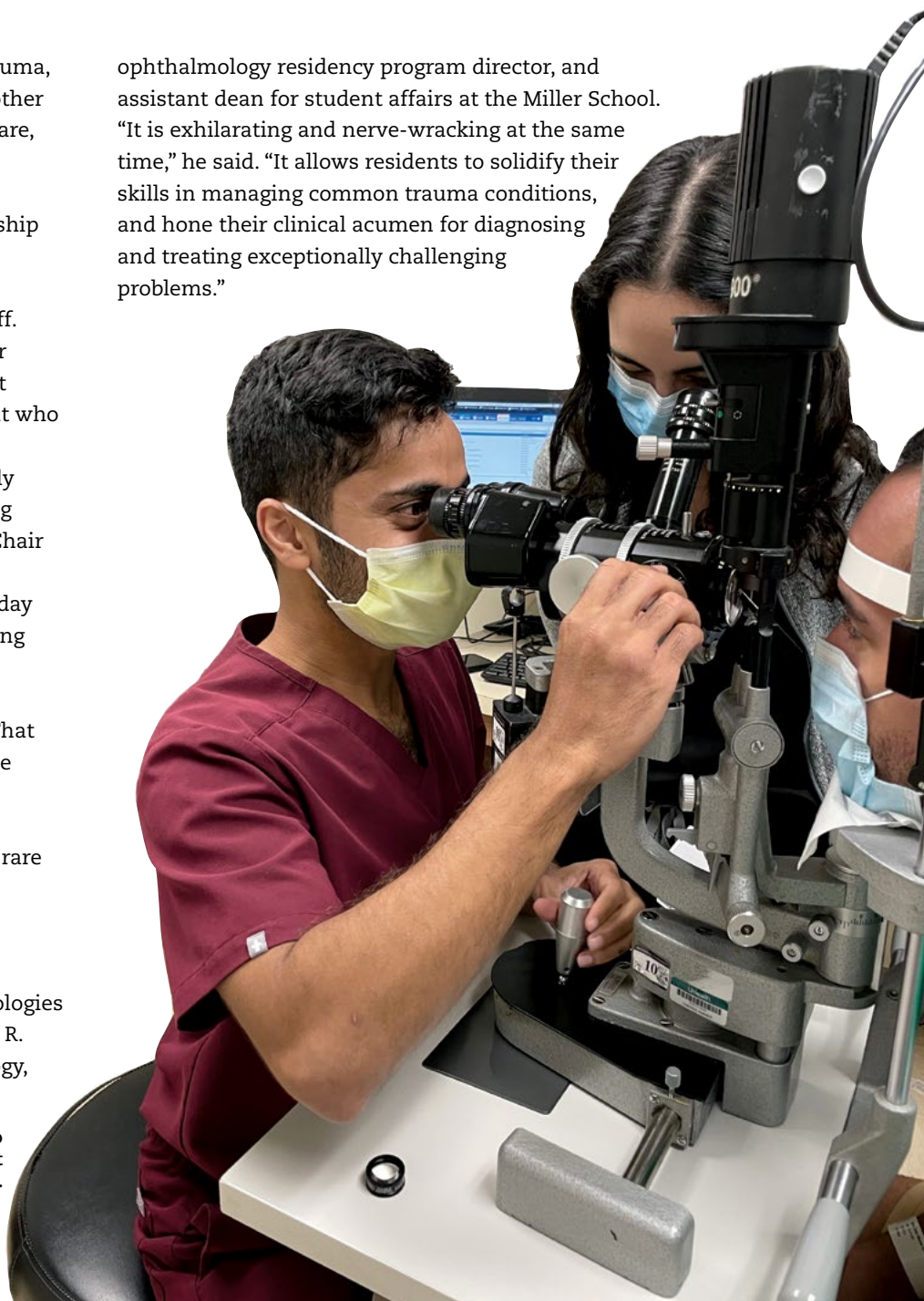
“In one eight-hour shift, I saw individuals in every one of our specialty areas,” Parrish said. That included a man who suddenly developed double vision resulting from a muscle condition called myasthenia gravis and a woman with multiple sclerosis who lost her vision unexpectedly as a rare side effect from oral steroids.

Exceptional Ophthalmology Training

For residents, Bascom Palmer’s ED provides unparalleled training on a wide variety of pathologies with all levels of complexity, according to Chris R. Alabiad, M.D., professor of clinical ophthalmology,

Dr. Zubair Ansari, an attending physician who supervises and teaches residents involved in patient care, with Dr. Naomi Gutkind, a first-year resident.

ophthalmology residency program director, and assistant dean for student affairs at the Miller School. “It is exhilarating and nerve-wracking at the same time,” he said. “It allows residents to solidify their skills in managing common trauma conditions, and hone their clinical acumen for diagnosing and treating exceptionally challenging problems.”



To take just one example, a patient in her 90s came in with a lesion on her eyeball. But rather than trauma, the attending resident found her condition was caused by a previously undiagnosed autoimmune disease called granulomatosis with polyangiitis. “Fortunately, she came to our Emergency Department in the nick of time,” said Alabiad. “We were able to manage her condition with medication, so she never lost her vision. This was a true emergency – if she had delayed coming to the Emergency Department, she would have lost her sight.”

Diana M. Laura, M.D., co-chief resident, says the training at Bascom Palmer is ideal for a future vitreoretinal surgeon. “From a learning experience, the training we receive in the ED is incredible,” she said. “We get referrals from international doctors, as well as our local community, and see many pathologies not common in the United States.

In her second week of training, Laura treated a patient with a rare ocular infectious disease. “He had an infection caused by a worm living in his eye,” she said. “Most ophthalmologists go through training without ever seeing that in real life – just reading about it in textbooks.”

Even the more typical cases, such as accidental injuries help ophthalmology residents hone their examination and surgical techniques, Laura added. Recently, she worked with Bascom Palmer’s ophthalmic plastic and reconstructive surgery specialists for several hours to help a patient whose circular saw blade had fragmented, throwing tiny bits of metal into the orbital bone surrounding the eyeball.

“We worked very carefully, and were able to remove every fragment and repair the orbit,” she said. “It was a very intense, very demanding case.”

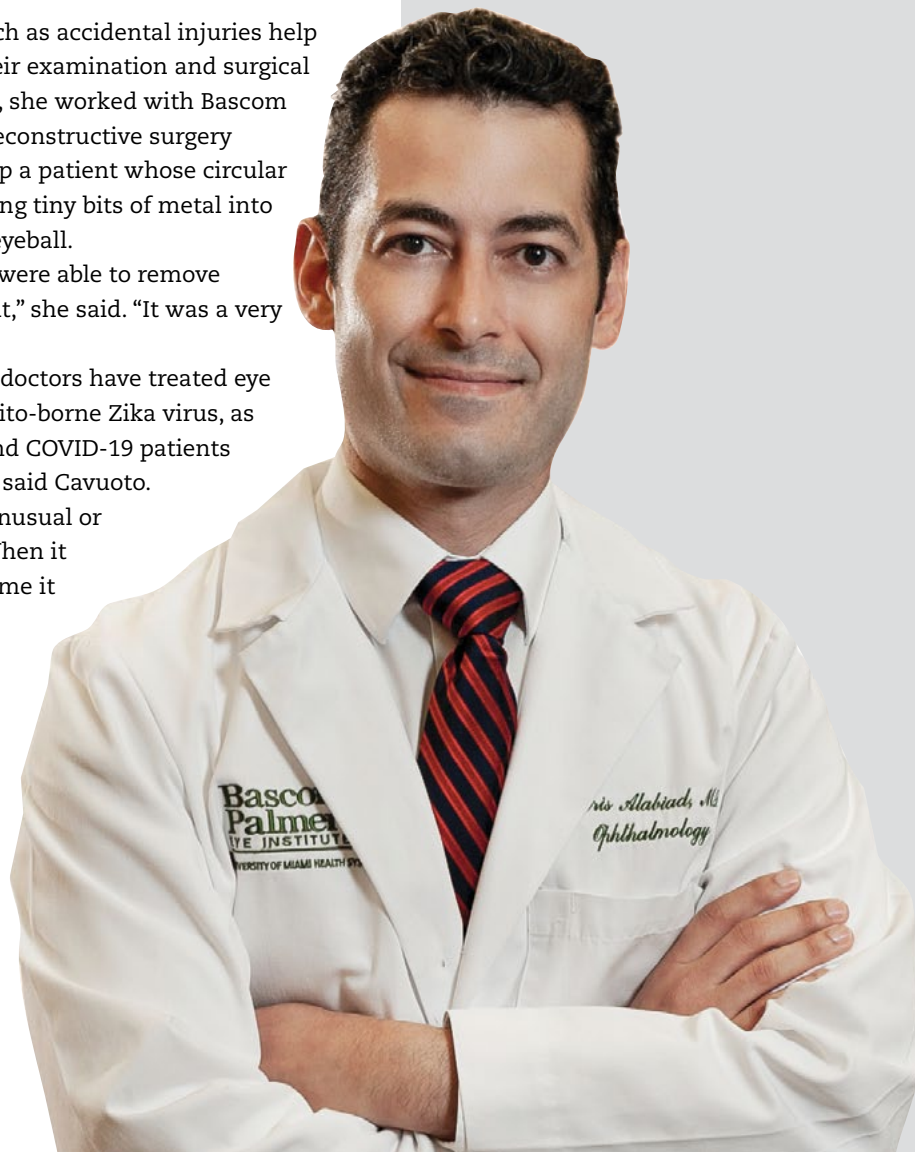
In recent years, Bascom Palmer doctors have treated eye emergencies related to the mosquito-borne Zika virus, as well as helping first-responders and COVID-19 patients deal with critical vision problems, said Cavuoto. “Every day, we see patients with unusual or unique conditions,” she added. “When it comes to eye emergencies, you name it and we’ve seen it.” ■

Dr. Chris Alabiad

BASCOM PALMER’S EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT IS OPEN IN MIAMI FOR ALL EYE EMERGENCIES 24 HOURS A DAY, 365 DAYS A YEAR.

If you experience any of the following, you should seek immediate treatment at the Bascom Palmer Emergency Department

- Eye trauma
- Bleeding of the eye
- A detached or torn retina
- Sudden loss of vision
- Foreign object in the eye
- Chemical burns
- Ocular infections



Bascom Palmer Ranked #1 in Ophthalmology For 20th Time



“Our goal is to deliver the best possible vision care to patients throughout our diverse South Florida community and around the world. We are committed to advancing education, vision research, and clinical care in collaboration with vision professionals across the globe.”

– Dr. Eduardo Alfonso

For the 18th consecutive year, Bascom Palmer is ranked the nation’s **Best in Ophthalmology** by *U.S. News & World Report*. Bascom Palmer has received the #1 ranking 20 times since the publication began surveying U.S. physicians for its annual “Best Hospitals” rankings 32 years ago.

The magazine’s Best Hospitals Guide ranks America’s top hospitals in 15 medical specialties and serves as a resource for consumers who seek optimal care in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of difficult medical conditions.

“We are honored to receive this prestigious recognition and thrilled to share this accolade with our patients. As Bascom Palmer, we provide the best clinical care possible and do so through the expertise and compassion of our exceptional team of 1,200 ophthalmologists, vision scientists, nurses, optometrists, technicians, and support staff,” said Eduardo C. Alfonso, M.D., director and chair of Bascom Palmer.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Bascom Palmer has delivered specialized vision care to its patients at its multiple locations in Florida. Moreover, the Institute deployed telehealth services and hybrid visits that allow patients to receive vision evaluations, consultations, and follow-up care in the comfort and convenience of their homes.

This year also brings praise for the Bascom Palmer ophthalmology residency program as it is once again ranked the best in the United States by *Doximity*, an online professional network for U.S. physicians.

Bascom Palmer is also recognized as one of the top two eye institutes in the country by *Ophthalmology Times*. While Bascom Palmer had been ranked the Best Overall Program each year for the past six years, this year’s top spot went to the Johns Hopkins Wilmer Eye Institute. ■



BEST HOSPITALS FOR OPHTHALMOLOGY		
Rank	Hospital	Reputation (%)
1	Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, University of Miami, Miami	46.0
2	Wills Eye Hospital, Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia	41.2
3	Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore	31.4
4	Mass. Eye and Ear Infirmary, Massachusetts Gen. Hosp., Boston	25.3
5	Stein and Doheny Eye Institutes, UCLA Medical Ctr., Los Angeles	20.4
6	Duke University Hospital, Durham	11.4
7	University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Iowa City	11.3
8	Kellogg Eye Center, Michigan Medicine, Ann Arbor	8.3
9	UCSF Medical Center, San Francisco	7.3
10	Cole Eye Institute, Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland	6.5
11	John A. Moran Eye Center, University of Utah, Salt Lake City	6.0
12	New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai, New York	5.5
13	USC Roski Eye Institute, Los Angeles	5.0

Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* 2021-2022

Celebrating Six Decades of Vision Leadership

On January 21, 1962, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute officially opened its doors as South Florida’s first academic center dedicated to vision care. Under the leadership of founding director Edward W. D. Norton, M.D., Bascom Palmer attracted talented clinicians and researchers who quickly began making major contributions to virtually every field of ophthalmology.

Six decades later, Bascom Palmer is one of the world’s leading eye institutes. It has opened satellite facilities throughout South Florida to provide its patients with convenient access to care. It has developed robust telehealth and virtual



education services to connect with patients and vision professionals almost anywhere in the world, and its scientists and clinician-researchers are making important discoveries that hold the promise of better treatments in the future.

Bascom Palmer will continue its mission to eliminate blinding diseases, to remain the world’s foremost center of ophthalmic education, and to offer the highest level of medical attention to every patient seeking eye care. Its tradition of excellence will continue to drive every aspect of its operation for the next 60 years and beyond. ■

“We applaud these exceptional women for their expertise, integrity, inspiration,

– Dr. Eduardo Alfonso

Nine esteemed ophthalmologists of the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute were selected for *The Ophthalmologist* magazine's Power List 2021, which honors the world's 100 most influential women in the field of ophthalmology.

“We applaud these exceptional women for their expertise, integrity, inspiration, leadership, and commitment to patients and physicians worldwide,” said **EDUARDO C. ALFONSO, M.D.**, the Kathleen and Stanley J. Glaser Chair in Ophthalmology and director of Bascom Palmer. “They personify the very best of ophthalmology.”



A retina and vitreous disease specialist, **AUDINA M. BERROCAL, M.D.**, is a world leader in the medical and surgical management of retinopathy of prematurity and pediatric vitreoretinal disorders. She has been the first surgeon to treat the youngest patient in the United States with the first FDA-approved gene therapy. She also devotes time to teaching and supporting women in the field of ophthalmology and retina.



Holder of the John T. Flynn Chair in Ophthalmology, **HILDA CAPÓ, M.D.**, is a specialist in pediatric ophthalmology and adult strabismus. She is world-renowned for her expertise in strabismus and adjustable sutures and is a pioneer in identifying the anesthetic agent's role in the onset of double vision after cataract surgery. She has trained more than 175 residents and fellows, reaffirming her abilities as an academician, educator, and surgeon.



JANET L. DAVIS, M.D., M.A., is an internationally recognized expert in uveitis as well as a medical retina and vitreoretinal specialist. She holds the Leach Chair in Ophthalmology. Her expertise includes infectious and inflammatory diseases of the eye. For the last four years, she has led the Bascom Palmer surgical team that has performed more than 100 subretinal gene therapy procedures for inherited retinal diseases such as retinitis pigmentosa and choroideremia.



KENDALL E. DONALDSON, M.D., M.S., is a cornea specialist whose primary research interests are in the areas of advancement in cataract surgery, and in particular, laser-assisted cataract surgery, as well as severe ocular surface disease. Each year, she presents more than 100 lectures at the local, national and international level, and has authored a variety of peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed articles and book chapters.



ANAT GALOR, M.D., is an expert on ocular surface pain and dry eye, and its relationship with neuropathic ocular pain. She is also an expert in the epidemiology and treatment of persistent pain after LASIK. Galor has evaluated the efficacy of several therapies in the treatment of neuropathic ocular pain. She has also focused on how ocular surface symptoms affect the quality of life.

Personified

leadership, and commitment to patients and physicians worldwide.”



For more than two decades, **ALANA GRAJEWSKI, M.D.**, has been a leader in the international effort to eradicate blindness from pediatric glaucoma. She established the Samuel & Ethel Balkan International Pediatric Glaucoma Center at Bascom

Palmer, the first integrated services center dedicated to pediatric glaucoma and anterior segment dysgenesis. An expert in specialized surgical treatment, her influence has been felt worldwide through patient care and education.



Deeply involved in the information technology aspect of medicine, **RANYA G. HABASH, M.D.**, is working to unite the world and help patients through technology. During her tenure at Bascom Palmer, she served as medical director of technology

innovation and was instrumental in developing the Institute's telehealth virtual visit program. The current CEO of LifeLong Vision Special Purpose Acquisition Corporation, Habash was also named to the Power List in 2017.



CAROL L. KARP, M.D., holder of the Richard K. Forster Chair in Ophthalmology, and the Dr. Ronald and Alicia Lepke Endowed Professorship in Corneal and External Diseases, is an expert in the management of ocular surface oncology and anterior

segment surgery. In the late 1990s, she pioneered the use of interferon for the treatment of ocular surface squamous neoplasia. Her work has helped to change the standard of care of these lesions. Karp was also named to the Power List in 2019.



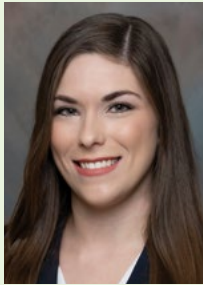
An expert in vision correction surgery, **SONIA YOO, M.D.**, is recognized as one of the world's most skilled cornea, cataract, and refractive surgeons, with exceptional experience and knowledge of the field. Associate medical director of Bascom

Palmer and holder of the Greentree Hickman Chair in Ophthalmology, Yoo is interested in the development and evaluation of new diagnostic and surgical technologies, as well as laser applications. She was also named to the Power List in 2018.

Bascom Palmer's faculty members have been well-represented on the Power List since its inception in 2014. In addition to Alfonso, who is a corneal and external diseases specialist; retina specialists **PHILIP J. ROSENFELD, M.D., PH.D.**, and **HARRY W. FLYNN, JR., M.D.**; ocular oncologist, **J. WILLIAM HARBOUR, M.D.**; and glaucoma specialist **RICHARD K. PARRISH, II, M.D.**, have been honored as the most influential doctors in the field. ■

To schedule a virtual or in-person appointment with a Bascom Palmer specialist, please call 1-888-845-0002 or visit bascompalmer.org.

Bascom Palmer Eye Institute is pleased to announce the appointment of three new faculty members. With these physicians, the Institute has increased the size of the faculty to 78 physicians and 17 scientific investigators. This dedicated team of 95 is committed to continuing Bascom Palmer's 60-year history of advancing the practices of ophthalmology through innovations in therapeutics, diagnostics, and vision research.



MICHELLE FALCONE, M.D.,

a specialist in pediatric ophthalmology and strabismus in adults and children, joins the faculty as an assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology. She received a bachelor of science degree in biology *summa cum laude*, as well as a doctor of medicine degree from the University of Miami as a member of the dual degree, honors program in medicine. Falcone is a member of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society. She completed a residency in ophthalmology at Bascom Palmer and a fellowship in pediatric ophthalmology and adult strabismus at Boston Children's Hospital, the primary pediatric teaching hospital for Harvard Medical School. Falcone is the recipient of the Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Fellowship Award. Her research interests include pediatric eye disorders, amblyopia, and complex strabismus in adults and children. She is available for in-person appointments at Palm Beach Gardens for our youngest patients (newborns through teens), as well as for adults with strabismus. Virtual visits are also available.



ALISON LAUTER, M.D.,

joins the faculty as an assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology. Glaucoma and cataract specialist, Lauter received a bachelor of science degree in human science *summa cum laude* from Georgetown University. She then received a medical degree *magna cum laude* from Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University, where she was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society and the Hobart Amory Hare Honor Society. Lauter completed a residency in ophthalmology at the New England Eye Center at Tufts Medical Center where she served as co-chief resident. She then completed a fellowship in glaucoma at Bascom Palmer. Her research interests include pseudoexfoliative glaucoma, adult glaucoma surgery, and the social/emotional impacts of glaucoma. She is available for in-person appointments at Naples as well as virtual visits.



ANGELA Y. ZHU, M.D.,

an assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology, joins the faculty as a specialist in pediatric and adult cornea, cataract, and external diseases. She received bachelor of science degrees in chemistry and biology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Subsequently, she spent a dedicated research year at the Whitehead Institute of Biomedical Research and later received a medical degree from Case Western Reserve University. Following a residency in ophthalmology at the Wilmer Eye Institute, she completed two fellowships: the first, in cornea at Bascom Palmer, and a second dedicated to pediatric cornea and external disease at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), affiliated with the University of Toronto. Zhu is the recipient of the ASCRS Foundation Resident Excellence Award and the Wilmer Research Association Mitchell Prize First Place Award. She is focused on caring for patients of all ages, including babies and children, with a variety of ocular surface and anterior segment disorders – including congenital or acquired cataracts – using cutting-edge medical and surgical techniques. Her translational research interests are integrated with her clinical practice to advance the medical and surgical treatment options for congenital and acquired childhood anterior segment pathologies. She is available for consultation either in-person or through virtual visits.

To schedule a virtual or in-person appointment with a Bascom Palmer specialist, please call 1-888-845-0002 or visit bascompalmer.org.



Dr. Harry Flynn



Dr. Steven Gedde



Dr. Carol Karp



Dr. Philip Rosenfeld



Dr. Mark Dunbar

America's Best Eye Doctors

Newsweek, a premier news magazine that has been bringing high-quality journalism to readers around the globe for more than 80 years, has selected five Bascom Palmer doctors among the top 300 eye doctors in the country. Congratulations to ophthalmologists **HARRY W. FLYNN, JR., M.D.**, **STEVEN J. GEDDE, M.D.**, **CAROL L. KARP, M.D.**, and **PHILIP J. ROSENFELD, M.D., PH.D.**, and optometrist **MARK T. DUNBAR, O.D.**, who are named America's Best Eye Doctors 2021. More than 10,000 eye doctors and other healthcare professionals were asked to recommend the doctors who earned the most respect in three categories: the quality of care they provided; the continuity of care; and the quality of technology they use in their practices.

Newsweek also ranked the 400 **"Best Ambulatory Surgery Centers"** in the nation, 35 of which are in Florida. Congratulations to Bascom Palmer's Surgery Center in Naples, ranked #5, and the Bascom Palmer Surgery Center at Palm Beach Gardens, ranked #13, in the State. Unlike these surgery centers which are ambulatory and free-standing facilities with operating rooms, Bascom Palmer largest surgery center in Miami is not 'ambulatory' as it is located within Bascom Palmer's Anne Bates Leach Eye Center.

The William L. McKnight Vision Research Center of the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute held its annual research retreat in October 2021. Hosted by **VITTORIO PORCIATTI, D.SC.**, the James L. Knight Professor in Ophthalmology, and director of scientific research, more than 90 of the Institute's physicians and scientists attended the virtual retreat along with colleagues from throughout the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. Looking to further develop the research center's strategic plan and to expand interdisciplinary collaborations, a broad range



of content was introduced during the plenary session and later discussed in detail in breakout rooms. Topics included the clinical and basic aspects of data science, vision restoration, cornea restoration, brain and eye, and ocular oncology.

The Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) has recently announced its Fellows Class of 2022. Congratulations to **PHILIP J. ROSENFELD, M.D., PH.D.**, for his election as Gold Fellow; **GIOVANNI GREGORI, PH.D.**, research associate professor of ophthalmology, and **SANJOY K. BHATTACHARYA, PH.D.**, professor of ophthalmology, as Silver Fellows. They join **FABRICE MANNIS, PH.D.**, a professor of biomedical engineering and ophthalmology, who was elected a Class of 2021 Silver Fellow. ARVO Fellows are role models and mentors for individuals pursuing careers in vision and ophthalmology research and help further ARVO's vision to advance research worldwide into understanding the visual system and preventing, treating, and curing its disorders.



Congratulations to Chief Resident, **KENNETH C. FAN, M.D., M.B.A.**, for being awarded the 2021 Ronald G. Michels Fellowship Foundation Award. This award is granted annually to outstanding second-year vitreoretinal fellows in training.

Bascom Palmer is pleased to share that Heru, a company born at Bascom Palmer, was named a Consumer Technology Association 2022 Innovation Awards Honoree in the virtual and augmented reality category. The product – digital glasses to diagnose and treat visual field loss, double vision, and other vision disorders – was developed by **MOHAMED ABU SHOUSHA, M.D., PH.D.**, associate professor of clinical ophthalmology, and his team of physicians, scientists, and engineers in Bascom Palmer’s Artificial Intelligence and Computer Augmented Vision Laboratory.



Dr. Mohamed Abu Shousha demonstrating digital glasses in his laboratory.



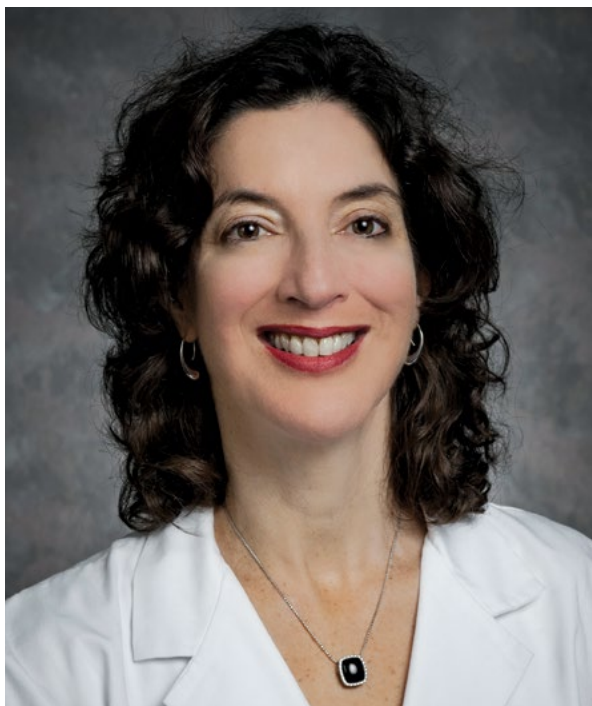
(l to r) Cornea fellow Dr. Ghada AlBayyat; UM 4th year medical students Harry Levin and Ethan Adre; cornea research fellow Adrianna Tovar; Bascom Palmer Chair Dr. Eduardo Alfonso; OMIG President Dr. Guillermo Amescua; cornea research fellows Drs. Paula Sepulveda and Andres Serrano.

Fifty of Bascom Palmer’s faculty members, residents, and fellows presented more than 120 lectures, symposiums, courses, and scientific posters and papers during the 2021 American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) annual meeting. Congratulations to **EDUARDO C. ALFONSO, M.D.**, for presenting the Jones/Smolin Lecture that

was co-sponsored by the Ocular Microbiology and Immunology Group (OMIG).

Kudos to **ELENA BITRIAN, M.D.**, for receiving an Achievement Award; and **STEVEN J. GEDDE, M.D.**, **PHILIP J. ROSENFELD, M.D., PH.D.**, and **SARAH WELLIK, M.D.**, for receiving Secretariat Awards.

Congratulations to **CAROL L. KARP, M.D.**, for being named the Castroviejo medalist for 2022. Each year the Castroviejo Society names the most outstanding individual in the field of cornea and anterior segment of the eye to receive the Castroviejo Medal and to deliver the named lecture at the Society's scientific symposium at the 2022 American Academy of Ophthalmology annual meeting. The Society's highest award is given in recognition of exceptional contributions in support of the promotion of knowledge, research, and understanding in cornea, external disease, and refractive surgery. The award is named for Ramon Castroviejo, M.D., the father of modern corneal transplant surgery and the inspiration for the founding of the Cornea Society. Only the third woman to receive the award since it was founded in 1975, Karp joins **JAYNE S. WEISS, M.D.**, (*Resident 1983*), who received the medal in 2020. One of the world's most renowned cornea and external disease specialists, Bascom Palmer Professor Emeritus, **RICHARD K. FORSTER, M.D.**, received the Castroviejo Medal in 1995. Karp holds the Richard K. Forster Chair in Ophthalmology as well as the Dr. Ronald and Alicia Lepke Endowed Professorship in Corneal and External Diseases.



Dr. Carol Karp

Kudos to Karp for also being selected as president-elect of the Pan-American Society of Ophthalmology (PAAO). With members in more than 35 countries in the Western hemisphere, the PAAO's mission is to provide continuing education, prevent blindness and promote scientific and cultural exchange among ophthalmologists. Bascom Palmer's chair, **EDUARDO C. ALFONSO, M.D.**, served as president of the PAAO from 2015-2017.

The Heed Fellowship for 2021-2022 has been awarded to glaucoma fellow **REBECCA CHEN, M.D.**, retina fellows **PATRICK STAROPOLI, M.D.**, and **HASENIN AL-KHERSAN, M.D.**, and cornea fellow **PAULA W. FENG, M.D.** One of the most prestigious honors for post-graduate studies in ophthalmology, the Heed fellowship is granted to outstanding ophthalmology residents who demonstrate promise in the pursuit of an academic medical career in patient care, education, and research.

(l to r) Drs. Rebecca Chen, Patrick Staropoli, Hasenin Al-khersan and Paula Feng





Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB) has granted the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine an unrestricted grant in the amount of \$115,000 a year to support eye research conducted by Bascom Palmer. This funding has been awarded based on a thorough review of criteria, including the department's research activities, laboratory environment, and clinical and scientific staff, as evaluated by RPB's renowned Scientific Advisory Panel. The University of Miami Miller School of Medicine holds one of 32 RPB Unrestricted Grants nationwide.

Bascom Palmer and the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine are pleased to announce two medical students have received Research to Prevent Blindness Medical Student Eye Research Fellowships

that will allow them to take a year off from medical school and devote that time to pursue a research project in ophthalmology. **CHRISTOPHER J. KALER** is currently between his third and fourth year of medical school in the combined MD/MPH program at the University of Miami (UM). He has worked part-time in Bascom Palmer's ocular oncology laboratory since his freshman year of medical school. This laboratory takes a broad approach to research, looking at genetics and genomics, cell biology, computational biology, developmental

biology, and bioinformatics to elucidate new therapies for patients with eye cancer. **MEHER SALEEM** received a bachelor of science degree from UM and is currently enrolled at Georgetown University Medical School. She will be completing her research project at Bascom Palmer in the laboratory of **DR. SANJOY BHATTACHARYA** where she will be investigating the activity of a protein found to be defective in glaucoma. The results of her research may provide novel knowledge on aqueous humor outflow in the trabecular meshwork and lead to the development of profound medical advancements in the treatment of glaucoma.



Christopher Kaler

“Much of the success of the vision research program at Bascom Palmer has been made possible by the generous and sustained support of the Research to Prevent Blindness. We gratefully acknowledge their support in our prolific scholarly production and value our relationship as a long-term, mutual collaboration with the shared goals of enhancing the quality of life by improving sight, preventing blindness, advancing ophthalmic knowledge, and innovative vision research.”

– Dr. Eduardo Alfonso

Research to Prevent Blindness and **the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO)**, also honored pediatric ophthalmologist, glaucoma specialist, and associate professor, **TA CHEN PETER CHANG, M.D.**, with an award for Iris Registry Research. This big data research will support a population-based study in glaucoma. Because glaucoma occurs in children at a much lower rate than in adults, ophthalmologists and parents do not have as much data to guide treatment options. Unlike adults, children are commonly treated with surgery. Chang will leverage the IRIS Registry, the world's largest medical specialty clinical database, to evaluate treatment options for children, as well as the outcomes of those treatments. This kind of data may also help ease the financial burden of childhood glaucoma. Chang joins assistant professor, **ADAM L. ROTHMAN, M.D.**, who received a 2020 RPB/AAO award for IRIS Registry Research. Rothman, a glaucoma and cataract specialist, will leverage the IRIS Registry to conduct a large-scale, population-based study to help understand the intraocular pressure-lowering effect of cataract surgery based upon a patient's age, race/ethnicities, co-morbidities, whether they have glaucoma, etc. Evidence shows that cataract surgery alone can significantly reduce intraocular pressure, but which patients best respond to this intervention? This research will provide ophthalmologists with critical insight into the best surgical options for their patients with glaucoma or those at risk of glaucoma.



For close to two decades, professor of ophthalmology, **SANJOY K. BHATTACHARYA, PH.D., M.TECH**, has studied the role of lipids in glaucoma. Long known for their role in heart disease – both positive and negative – lipids are hydrophobic compounds found in the eye.

The Bhattacharya laboratory is working on better understanding intraocular pressure homeostasis in the anterior eye to prevent damage to the optic nerve. A major impetus of the lab is on multi-omics of axon regeneration using worldwide collaboration as well as big data analytics and machine learning to better understand molecular pathways that may help adult axon regeneration. Axon regeneration is critical in developing intervention strategies to restore lost vision in elderly patients suffering from glaucoma or another traumatic eye disease. His team has also made a seminal discovery, as published in *eNeuro*, journal of the Society for Neuroscience, identifying a lipid that promotes appropriate re-myelination via conversion of mature oligodendrocytes from their progenitors.

In addition to his ongoing funded research, Bhattacharya has been awarded a pilot research grant from **Santen Inc. USA**, titled, “Evaluation of Compounds for IOP Changes and Lipid Expression Alterations.” He also received a grant from the **National Eye Institute** on primary open-angle glaucoma or glaucoma in general. Bhattacharya has recently been appointed as reviews and special issue editor of *Experimental Eye Research*, and editor-in-chief of *Proteomics and Systems Biology in Optic Nerve Regeneration*.

The Glaucoma Foundation has also funded Bhattacharya, and **RICHARD K. LEE, M.D.**, for their research project, “Lipidomic Analyses of Aqueous Humor of Pseudoexfoliation Glaucoma.” The doctors will identify the lipids in the clear fluid of the front part of the eye known as the aqueous humor. These lipids are part of cell membranes and are involved in the biological functions of the tissues in the eye. This analysis will show a difference in lipids between pseudoexfoliation glaucoma and normal eyes. For example, the addition of molecules that provide rigidity to cell membranes or perform important cell signaling, or the removal of known toxic molecules, may be early intervention strategies for treating pseudoexfoliation glaucoma.

TA CHEN PETER CHANG, M.D.,

has also received a prestigious 2021 Shaffer Grant for Innovative Glaucoma Research from the **Glaucoma**

Research Foundation, for his high-impact genetic study of open-angle glaucoma in the Haitian Community. The objective of the study is to identify the genes associated with primary open-angle glaucoma affecting the Haitian community by screening high-risk individuals with the eye disease. The work proposed is expected to establish the first high-quality glaucoma genetic database of the Haitian population. This rich database will increase the diversity of glaucoma genetic study populations and lay the key steps to the personalized approach of glaucoma care for the Haitian community.

Do you have an eye concern?



Schedule a **Rapid Virtual Eye Care** appointment for a quick and easy way to connect with one of our doctors from the comfort of your home.

Call 800-329-7000 or visit BascomPalmer.org/RVEC

Thanks to the support and generosity of a \$100,000 grant from the **Batchelor Foundation**, children with retinoblastoma tumors may one day have a new, targeted therapy against this deadly disease. Retinoblastoma (Rb) is the most common eye cancer in children and a significant contributor to childhood cancer deaths worldwide. While clinical management of these tumors has advanced, the non-specific and highly toxic nature of current therapies can result in life-long visual compromise and other health complications. Cost and limited access to advanced procedures make eye removal the only life-saving



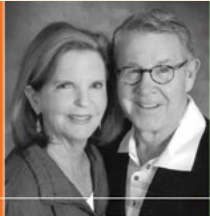
Dr. Daniel Pelaez

option for many patients around the globe. However, due to lack of awareness and access to good quality ophthalmic care, as well as the social stigma and psychological effects, many parents forego this treatment, resulting in a five-year survival rate below 50% worldwide. A major obstacle to the development of targeted therapies that spare the normal tissues in the eye is the lack of laboratory models in which these tumors may be studied. Under the direction of **DANIEL PELAEZ, PH.D.**, scientific director of Bascom Palmer's Dr. Nasser Ibrahim Al-Rashid's Orbital Vision Research Center, researchers have developed a 3D human retinal organoid platform that incorporates stem cell biology, 3D culture techniques, tissue engineering, gene editing, and genetic analysis that have the potential to recapitulate the biological nuances of retinoblastoma. Studying early-stage tumors, including their pre-malignant phase, would shed light on the molecular drivers of Rb progression and lead to more targeted therapies, preserving vision and saving lives. This effort is also supported by an NCI R01 grant as the first laboratory platform for retinoblastoma tumor modeling.



RETINOBLASTOMA
When looking at a photo of a child, "red-eye" is good. If the child's eye appears to have white centers in flash photos, request a pediatric ophthalmic examination immediately.

option for many patients around the globe. However, due to lack of awareness and access to good quality ophthalmic care, as well as the social stigma and psychological effects, many parents forego this treatment, resulting in a five-year survival rate below 50% worldwide. A major obstacle to the development of targeted therapies that spare the normal tissues in the eye is the lack of laboratory models in which these tumors may be studied. Under the direction of **DANIEL PELAEZ, PH.D.**, scientific director of Bascom Palmer's Dr. Nasser Ibrahim Al-Rashid's Orbital Vision Research



Bascom Palmer Eye Institute
**Diana and John Clarkson
Lectureship on Advances in
Global Ophthalmic Education**

A Distinguished Lecture to Honor the Life and Work of Exceptional Ophthalmologists

A generous gift from **Diana and John Clarkson** has established a new lecture within Bascom Palmer's Distinguished Lecture Series. The eponymous lecture will feature specialists in global ophthalmic education. A resident, chief resident, and member of the faculty since 1975, **JOHN G. CLARKSON, M.D.**, is dean emeritus of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, and professor emeritus of ophthalmology. Under his leadership in 1994, Bascom Palmer attained the #1 ranking from U.S. News & World Report for the first time. After stepping down as dean in 2006, Clarkson became executive director of the American Board of Ophthalmology, the independent, nonprofit organization responsible for certifying ophthalmologists in the United States. In 2012, he received the National Physician of the Year Lifetime Achievement Award conferred by the publishers of America's Top Doctors. He epitomizes medical education, having had a tremendous impact on the careers of physicians who

graduated from the Miller School, as well as scores of ophthalmologists throughout the world whom he has mentored or trained.

In 2015, he received one of ophthalmology's highest honors, the Lucien Howe Medal of the American Ophthalmological Society, for distinguished service to the profession. The same year, the University of Miami established the Dr. John G. Clarkson Endowed Chair in Medical Education at Bascom Palmer, in recognition of Clarkson's contributions to ophthalmic education and training. Steven J. Gedde, M.D., Bascom Palmer's vice chairman of education is the current holder of the Chair.

Dr. Clarkson will give full credit for his success to Diana, his wife of 57 years. Having retired in Charlotte, North Carolina, both are active volunteers for their church, where Diana, a former school teacher volunteers in the church gift shop with proceeds supporting local missions. Dr. Clarkson serves as a volunteer ophthalmologist for indigent patients at the local Lions Eye Clinic in Charlotte.

The inaugural Diana and John Clarkson Lecture featured Juan F. Batlle, M.D., medical director and founder of Centro Laser in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. An alumnus of Bascom Palmer, (resident 1993) Batlle directs an internationally acclaimed ophthalmic internship program that allows young ophthalmologists, nationally and internationally, access to a responsible internship work experience.

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When *U.S. News & World Report* asked board-certified ophthalmologists who they look to for the best ophthalmic care in America, one name has appeared at the top of the list, year after year after year: Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. In fact, Bascom Palmer just received the No. 1 ranking in the nation for an unprecedented 20th time. We thank all the dedicated ophthalmologists around the country who recognize the efforts of the physicians, researchers, educators and staff at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, and we thank our patients for entrusting their vision to ours. We look forward to many years of continued success together.



If you do not wish to receive further communications from the University of Miami Medical Programs, please send your request by email to: medoptout@med.miami.edu or mail your request to UHealth Privacy, P.O. Box 019132 (M-879), Miami, Florida 33101. Be sure to include the following: name, address, phone number and email address. Only complete requests can be processed. You may receive additional communications during the processing of your request.

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Naples
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Plantation
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Coral Gables
The Lennar Foundation
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5555 Ponce de Leon Boulevard
Coral Gables, Florida 33146
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Top row: Drs. Ranya Habash, Audina Berrocal, Kendall Donaldson, Anat Galor, Bottom row: Drs. Alana Grajewski, Janet Davis, Hilda Capó, Carol Karp, Sonia Yoo