

World-Class Medical Education

Every year, vision specialists from around the world travel to South Florida to learn from Bascom Palmer's renowned clinicians and researchers.

Students considering a career in ophthalmology or physicians continuing training through ophthalmology residencies and fellowships also receive a warm welcome from the Institute's faculty.

Now, Bascom Palmer has solidified its commitment to training the next generation of clinicians and researchers with the creation of the Global Center for Ophthalmic Education.

"Providing outstanding patient care, advancing our understanding of ocular diseases through research, and medical education are the three aspects of our mission of service," said Steven J. Gedde, M.D., professor of ophthalmology and holder of the John G. Clarkson Chair in Ophthalmology. Gedde, vice chair for education and the residency program director at Bascom Palmer, added "We want our medical students, residents and fellows, as well as ophthalmologists around the world, to be well prepared to deliver outstanding patient care in their communities."

Launching a new education center

The Institute's new center is dedicated to advancing ophthalmic knowledge and sharing the latest scientific and clinical findings with the worldwide ophthalmic community, according to Maria Serrano-Brosco, executive director.

"We are continuing Bascom Palmer's tradition of leadership in ophthalmic education," she said. "We organize international partnerships, collaborate with ophthalmic societies and institutions around the world, and produce professional lectures and educational events here in South Florida."

The new center encompasses all aspects of ophthalmic education, from medical students at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine



Generation of Leaders in Ophthalmology

to in-person, video and online programs for ophthalmologists in South Florida, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia.

“Our programs have a common theme – advancing ophthalmic knowledge globally,” said Serrano-Brosco. “Many of our offerings have been available for years, but the center allows us to focus on them more closely as a team.”

To house the new education center, a major modernization of the Mary and Edward Norton Library of Ophthalmology at Bascom Palmer is now in the planning stages. The library experienced considerable flooding damage during Hurricane Irma, and the necessary renovations provided an ideal opportunity to transform it into a library of the 21st century. “We are creating a new space that encourages collaboration and communication among our faculty members, residents and fellows, said Gedde. “It will become the epicenter of the educational mission for our Institute.”

Training residents and fellows

For more than 55 years, Bascom Palmer has made residency and fellowship training one of its highest priorities. The Institute’s residency training program is ranked as the best in the nation by *Ophthalmology Times*, an industry periodical, and has also been ranked #1 by Doximity.com, the largest online physician network, multiple times. “Our fellowship training programs are also considered among the best in the country,” added Gedde. “We have approximately 35 fellows train each year at the Institute, in addition to 21 residents.”

Every year, Bascom Palmer’s faculty face the painstaking task of selecting a handful of residents and fellows from the hundreds of well-qualified applicants. “We receive more than 500 applications for seven residency positions each year,” said Gedde. “That allows us to bring the best and the brightest into our training program.”

One example of “home-grown talent” is current co-chief resident Ashley Crane, M.D., who earned her bachelor’s and medical degrees from the University of Miami, before entering Bascom Palmer’s ophthalmology residency program.

“For me, being accepted as a resident at Bascom Palmer was a dream come true,” she said. “It’s been wonderful to be part of a group of highly motivated and wonderfully qualified peers. It’s like joining the worldwide Bascom Palmer family.”



This year is particularly special for Crane as she and co-chief resident Kimberly Tran, M.D., prepare to go into vitreoretinal surgery. “This is the first year that Bascom Palmer has had two female chief residents,” she said. “That marks another milestone for the Institute.”

Bascom Palmer 2018-2019 chief residents Dr. Ashley Crane and Dr. Kimberly Tran

During the first year of the residency training at Bascom Palmer, residents learn the basic techniques of diagnosis and medical management of a variety of eye diseases. The second year is dedicated to in-depth exposure to ophthalmic subspecialties: retina, corneal and external diseases, glaucoma, neuro-ophthalmology, pediatric ophthalmology and oculoplastics, as well as an introduction to intraocular surgery. Within the final year of the program, residents assume full responsibility for the medical and surgical care of patients, learning about all types of eye diseases as they receive further subspecialty training.

Bascom Palmer is in the forefront of using simulation training to help residents develop a step-by-step understanding of surgical procedures. Also included in the second-year training is spending 10-20 hours on a surgical simulator at the Miami Veterans Medical Center, as part of the Institute’s team approach to caring for the nation’s veterans.

“This training is part of a systematic training protocol that includes classroom sessions on modern cataract extraction techniques and vitreoretinal surgical procedures,” said Ninel Gregori, M.D., associate professor of clinical ophthalmology and chief of eye care at the Miami Veterans Medical Center. “After implementing our simulator training,



Dr. Chris Alabiad

we found that the complication rate decreased for our patients,” she said, “Furthermore, our residents found the training worthwhile and recommended it be continued.”

Educating medical students

Medical students at the Miller School usually get their first clinical exposure to patients with vision disorders at Bascom Palmer, which serves as the department of ophthalmology for the school.

Kara M. Cavuoto, M.D., associate professor of clinical ophthalmology, who completed an ophthalmology residency and a fellowship in pediatric ophthalmology and adult strabismus at Bascom Palmer, directs the ophthalmology rotations and elective classes for the Miller School students at Bascom Palmer and at the Miami Veteran’s Medical Center.

“Our medical student programs run for two to four weeks and include an option of ‘shadowing’ Bascom Palmer’s physicians for an additional two weeks in a clinical or operating room setting,” Cavuoto said. “We also offer a rotation in ocular pathology – an option that is available at only a handful of academic institutions.”

Surgical simulation is also provided for medical students taking the ophthalmology elective. They spend half a day in the HelpMeSee surgical simulation program at the University’s Gordon Center for Research in Medical Education with instruction from voluntary assistant professor of ophthalmology,

Daniel E. Hutter, M.D. “That allows them to do hands-on ophthalmic surgery in a virtual setting, giving them practice before actually operating on the eye,” Cavuoto said.

Several years ago, Chris R. Alabiad, M.D., associate professor of clinical ophthalmology and assistant dean for student affairs at the Miller School, developed a “flipped classroom” one-week course for second-year medical students. “A medical education fellow and I created 60 short videos for students to watch,” he said. “This allows them to come to the classroom ready to discuss clinical cases. It’s a very cool and innovate way to teach.”

Alabiad now teaches the class with Carol L. Karp, M.D., professor of ophthalmology and holder of the Richard K. Forster Chair in Ophthalmology. He also partners with Cavuoto to counsel and mentor fourth-year medical students seeking a residency in ophthalmology.

“We review the students’ statements, conduct mock interviews and encourage them to connect with patients, staff and faculty who can help them move ahead with their medical careers,” he said. “It’s very rewarding to watch them be accepted at Bascom Palmer or other excellent residency programs across the country.”

Another component of the Institute’s graduate training is an innovative Master of Science in Vision Science and Investigative Ophthalmology (MVSIO) program. The first of its kind in the world, MVSIO offers comprehensive training in ophthalmic translational research, problem-based learning, management and a skill set available only at Bascom Palmer,



Dr. Kara Cavuoto

Inter-American
Course
in Clinical
Ophthalmology
(Curso) 2018



as it prepares students for a Ph.D. program in vision science and investigative ophthalmology. Led by Bascom Palmer's faculty members and supported by leading-edge technology, the program was conceived and is directed by Sanjoy K. Bhattacharya, Ph.D., professor of ophthalmology. The MVSIO program currently has five students, including three international scholars. Three other students graduated in May 2018.

Global medical education

Bascom Palmer maintains strong ties with South Florida's clinical and research community, offering a year-round series of educational programs that include weekly Grand Rounds, as well as a Distinguished Lecture Series and Frontiers in Vision Science lectures.

The Institute also reaches out to vision specialists around the world. One example is the Institute's Inter-American Course in Clinical Ophthalmology (Curso) for practicing ophthalmologists in Latin America and the Caribbean. Now in its 40th year, Curso recently brought more than 800 ophthalmologists from over 30 countries to Miami for sessions presented with simultaneous English-Spanish translation.

"Great things happen when you bring ophthalmologists together," said Serrano-Brosco. "Along with learning from the presentations and lectures, these clinicians and researchers interact with each other, discuss their cases, and look at research opportunities to network with each other."

Juan F. Batlle, M.D. (resident and chief resident, 1985) actively participates in teaching at Curso. "Bascom Palmer's founders dedicated their lives to ophthalmology with a passion and left us with a legacy to pursue excellence in patient care, teach ophthalmology and conduct research that opened our minds to a new era of technology and opportunity," Batlle said. "We owe Dr. Edward W.D. Norton, (Bascom Palmer's founding chair), an eternal debt of gratitude and hold him and the Institute as examples of what can be done to make this world a better place for those with visual impairments."

In addition to fostering peer-to-peer relationships throughout the Western Hemisphere, Bascom Palmer partners with ophthalmology societies in North Africa, the Middle East, Europe and other locations to produce webinars, online programs and other educational offerings. "Our goal is to make it easier and more convenient for ophthalmologists to learn about the latest advances in their vision specialties," said Serrano-Brosco.

Along with continuing medical education courses, the Global Center hosts a robust clinical observer program. Last year, 60 observers, including 45 international participants, spent one to three months shadowing Bascom Palmer clinicians, learning skills to take back to their own countries.

The Institute also welcomes research observers who spend several months learning from professionals at Bascom Palmer's Evelyn F. and William L. McKnight Research Center. This year, the Institute will host about 50 research scholars, a number that has grown dramatically from only 16 in 2009. Another 25 professionals and students have participated in the research trainee program.

A worldwide alumni association

Looking ahead, Gedde says the Global Center for Ophthalmic Education will play an increasingly important role in connecting students, residents and fellows with Bascom Palmer's 1,176-member global alumni association.

Currently, the Institute's alumni are serving their communities in 41 countries around the world, including more than 45 graduates who have become ophthalmology department chairs at medical schools and teaching hospitals.

"Our new global center will coordinate our outreach initiatives as we enhance our educational programs," said Gedde. "By investing in communications technology, as well as traditional lectures and conferences, we will continue to fulfill our mission of advancing medical knowledge throughout the world." ■



Maria Serrano-Brosco and Dr. Juan Batlle

