AEVR’S EMERGING VISION SCIENTISTS DAY ON CAPITOL HILL

The first-ever class of 21 Emerging Vision Scientists (see names in box below) to participate in the AEVR and NAEVR events, reflecting the breadth of breakthrough vision research, who were nominated by their Departments of Ophthalmology or Schools/Colleges of Optometry.

Emerging Vision Scientists Educate about Research to Reduce the Burden of Eye Disease

Recognizing World Sight Day 2015, on October 7 AEVR’s Decade of Vision 2010-2020 Initiative hosted its first-ever Emerging Vision Scientists Day on Capitol Hill, which was funded by a grant from Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB). These 21 young investigators from across the United States who have not yet received their first investigator-initiated (ROI) grant, attended the VISION 2020 USA Congressional Briefing (see story, far right), observed a rally to “Raise the Caps” hosted by the Nondefense Discretionary (NDD) United coalition to which NAEVR belongs, and displayed posters of their research in an evening reception in the Rayburn House Office Building foyer.

Both the educational and advocacy activities were built around one question: “How will the breakthrough research being conducted by these Emerging Vision Scientists prevent, delay, and treat vision disorders, which will grow to an annual U.S. cost burden of $717 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars by year 2050,” as projected in a 2014 Prevent Blindness study. Researchers also cited results from AEVR’s 2014 attitudinal survey—commissioned by Research!America from Zagby Analytics and sponsored by a grant from RPB—which found that a majority of Americans across racial and ethnic lines describe losing vision as potentially having the greatest impact on their day-to-day life.

In addition to the poster display, AEVR Board President Dr. Peter McDonnell hosted a short program at which NEI Deputy Director Belinda Seto, Ph.D. and RPB President Brian Hofland, Ph.D. spoke to the audience, which consisted of Members of Congress, their staff, and representatives from vision community organizations.

Stating that, at this stage in her career, “the part of my job that is the most fun is interacting with young investigators, who have such passion for their research,” Dr. Seto acknowledged that many of the ideas represented in the posters align with the NEI Audacious Goals Initiative’s (AGI) focus on regenerating neurons and neural connections in the eye and visual system. She viewed all of the posters and interacted with Congressional Members and their staff.

Staff from the office of House Energy and Commerce Committee Chair Fred Upton (R-MI) at the poster of Rajesh Rao, M.D. (Kellogg Eye Center/University of Michigan), right, detailing his work on AMD and glaucoma.

Left to right: AEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky with Cong. Don Young (R-AK).

Dr. McDonnell (left) and Perre Smalls from the office of Cong. William Clay (D-MO), right, at the poster of Pinakin Davey, Ph.D., O.D. (Western University of Health Sciences College of Optometry) which details his work on AMD and glaucoma.

Left to right: Jack Whalen III, Ph.D. (USC Eye Institute/Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California) with Dr. Seto and Brian Hofland, Ph.D. (RPB) in front of his poster featuring research on novel biomaterials for ophthalmic applications.

Kia Washington, M.D. (University of Pittsburgh) discusses her research into total eye transplantation.

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American Eye and Ear Vision Research

RAR’S EMERGING VISION SCIENTISTS:

Martin-Paul Agbaga, Ph.D. (University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center)
Sumit Bhattacharya, Ph.D. (University of Toledo Medical Center)
Kevin Chan, Ph.D. (University of Pittsburgh)
Heather Chandler, Ph.D. (Ohio State University College of Optometry)
Jason Comander, M.D., Ph.D. (Massachusetts Eye & Ear Infirmary/ Harvard School of Medicine)
Pinakin Davey, O.D., Ph.D. (Western University of Health Sciences College of Optometry)
Amir Kashani, M.D., Ph.D. (USC Eye Institute/Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California)
Leo Kim, M.D., Ph.D. (Massachusetts Eye & Ear Infirmary/ Harvard School of Medicine)
Marc Levin, M.D., Ph.D. (University of California/San Francisco)

Reyna Martinez-De Luna, Ph.D. (SUNY Upstate Medical University)
Jason Miller, M.D., Ph.D. (Kellogg Eye Center/University of Michigan)
Eric Nudelman, M.D., Ph.D. (University of California/San Diego)
Daniel Pelaez, Ph.D. (University of Miami/ Bascom Palmer Eye Institute)
Stacy Pineles, M.D. (Jules Stein Eye Institute/UCLA)
Nicholas Port, Ph.D. (Indiana University School of Optometry)
Rajesh Rao, M.D. (Kellogg Eye Center/University of Michigan)
Shandiz Tehrani, M.D., Ph.D. (Oregon Health & Science University)
William Tuten, O.D., Ph.D. (University of California/Berkeley)
Kia Washington, M.D. (University of Pittsburgh)
Jack Whalen, III, Ph.D. (USC Eye Institute/Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California)
Robert Wojciechowski, O.D., Ph.D. (Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine)

The NEI Deputy Director Belinda Seto, Ph.D. (left), and NEI Board President Dr. Peter McDonnell (right) addressed the audience.

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