**Translational Research**

**NIH Establishes NCATS**

On December 23, NIH announced the establishment of NCATS per the FY2012 appropriations conference agreement signed into law that day as P.L. 112–74 (see page 2 story). National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) Director Thomas Insel, M.D. is serving as the Acting NCATS Director and Kathy Hudson, Ph.D. as Deputy Director. For FY2012, NCATS funding is $575 million and consists primarily of reallocated funds from programs located within the Office of the NIH Director, the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), and the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR), which has been abolished. New funding is reflected in the $10 million Congress approved to support the Cures Acceleration Network (CAN) Board and related activities. In addition to CAN, other major NIH programs that will comprise NCATS include:

- Bridging Interventional Development Gaps
- Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA)

**NAEVR Meets with FDA on Ophthalmic Drug Review Changes**

On January 6, NAEVR participated in an American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) and American Glaucoma Society (AGS) meeting with representatives of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to discuss the implications for ophthalmic drug reviews from the May 2011 reorganization of the Office of Antimicrobial Products (OAP) within the Office of New Drugs (OND) in the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER). In the reorganization, OAP realigned its three reviewing divisions, moving ophthalmic review from the previous Division of Anti-Infective and Ophthalmology Products and transplant product review from the previous Division of Special Pathogen and Transplant Products and combining these into a new Division of Transplant and Ophthalmology Products (DTOP), directed by Renata Albrecth, M.D., Wiley Chambers, M.D. continues to serve as the Deputy Director in this new division.

Michael Repka, M.D. (Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine), who serves as the AAO’s Medical Director for Government Affairs and as Chair of the FDA's Dermatologic and Ophthalmic Drugs Advisory Committee, led the discussion focused on the potential impact of the reorganization on the timeliness of new ophthalmic drug reviews. OND Director John Jenkins, M.D. and OAP Director Edward Cox, M.D., M.P.H., described the OAP reorganization, noting it was primarily done for greater efficiencies in the use of limited resources. Although the pairing of transplant products and ophthalmic products was not designed to be a match—it resulted because each area did not have sufficient volume of reviews to warrant a separate division—OAP is tracking the workload associated with each type of product review to properly align resources. Generally, OND is also centralizing several of the disciplines needed in review (for example, pharmacology, chemistry, statistics) so that they are available to all divisions. Since these centralized reviewers may not have had past experience with a specific division and its products, OND has also established an internal dispute resolution process.

NAEVR used the meeting as an opportunity to discuss the importance of the joint NEI/FDA Endpoints Symposium, managed by ARVO and engaging representatives from CDER and the Center for Devices and Radiological Health's (CDRH) Division of Ophthalmology, Neurology, and Ear, Nose and Throat Devices. To date, five Symposia have been held, including two on Glaucoma, and one each on Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD), Visual Prostheses, and Patient Reported Outcomes.

**Hageman Receives 2011 Pisart Award**

On January 19, during a meeting of the Atlantic Coast Retinal Club and Macula 2012 Scientific Symposium, Lighthouse International President and CEO Mark Ackermann presented Gregory Hageman, Ph.D. (Moran Eye Center/University of Utah) with the 2011 Pisart Award in recognition of his pioneering work on the association between the complement pathway and development of AMD. AEVR has featured Dr. Hageman’s work at Congressional briefings in 2005 and 2008, and has invited him to once again speak on September 19 at AEVR’s International AMD Awareness Week briefing to update Congress on his research.

**AUPO Session Focuses on Translation**

Left to right: On January 27, at the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology (AUPO) Annual Meeting, J. Mark Petrash, Ph.D. (University of Colorado School of Medicine/Denver and Immediate-Past ARVO President) joined Scott Cousins, M.D. (Duke University School of Medicine) in hosting a session entitled Different Models for Translating Research into Clinical Innovations. Both Dr. Petrash and Dr. Cousins serve as Research Director members of AUPO.

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Image Courtesy of Lighthouse International