NAEVR and AEVR Initiate NEI 40th Anniversary, Decade of Vision 2010-2020 Events

On January 28, in the midst of stimulus debate, NAEVR and AEVR hosted a reception for Members of the 111th Congress and their staff. In his welcome comments, Cong. Pete Sessions (R-TX) announced NEI’s 40th anniversary in 2009. NAEVR/AEVR’s James Jorkasky added that the reception begins numerous events in 2009 to educate about the value of NEI-funded vision research. He also urged Hill offices to support a new NAEVR/AEVR initiative, *Decade of Vision 2010-2020*—a sustained effort to recognize federally funded vision research that benefits all Americans. NAEVR is working with its Capitol Hill champions to pass House and Senate resolutions that acknowledge NEI’s 40th anniversary and designate 2010-2020 as the *Decade of Vision*.

Vision Community Unites to Observe World Glaucoma Day on Capitol Hill

To recognize the second annual World Glaucoma Day (WGD) on March 12, AEVR sponsored a March 10 Capitol Hill briefing to educate Members of Congress and their staffs. In introducing the briefing, AEVR’s James Jorkasky read from a March 6 statement issued by NEI Director Paul Sieving, M.D., Ph.D., noting that NEI currently spends $65 million in support of 168 glaucoma studies, including the newly initiated NEI Glaucoma Human genetics collaboratation, known as NEIGHBOR, through which seven U.S. research teams will lead genetic studies of the disease.

The featured speakers included Murray Fingeret, O.D., F.A.A.O., (Brooklyn/St. Albans Campus, Department of Veterans Administration New York Harbor Health Care System), who spoke about the incidence and burden of the disease, and Rohit Varma, M.D., M.P.H., (Doheny Eye Institute, University of Southern California), who spoke about research and treatments. Both speakers had participated in a March 13-14, 2008, joint NEI/Food and Drug Administration (FDA) *Glaucoma Endpoints* meeting at which researchers acknowledged that glaucoma is a complex, neurodegenerative disease in which detectable changes within the eye may not progress linearly or in concert with functional changes, that is, vision loss.

AEVR was joined by the American Glaucoma Society (AGS), ARVO, the Glaucoma Research Foundation (GRF), and The Glaucoma Foundation (TGF) in sponsoring the briefing, which was one of many hundreds of events being held around the globe.

Murray Fingeret, O.D., F.A.A.O. “Glaucoma prevalence in the U.S. is 2.2 million individuals and approaching 60 million individuals globally. However, anywhere from 50-75 percent of individuals with glaucoma are undiagnosed, as it often has no symptoms until vision is lost.”

Rohit Varma, M.D., M.P.H. “Researchers are studying the genetic basis of glaucoma and using genes to determine a potential response to medical treatment, that is, prior to treating, knowing how a drug is going to work.”

The Glaucoma Foundation’s Scott Christensen announces a glaucoma screening event conducted by a dozen eye specialists from The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary to be held on March 11 at the United Nations in New York City.