EDUCATION

AEVR’s World Glaucoma Week 2013
Briefing Features Real-Time OCT Imaging

He stressed that structural changes in the optic nerve and retinal nerve fiber layer may be predictive of glaucoma and how Spectral Domain Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) is valuable as a means by which to measure these changes—in comparison to baseline images for an age group or population and in relation to a patient’s own previous images. OCT, which displays a three-dimensional and cross-sectional view of the retina and not just the superficial view of its surface provided by conventional imaging technologies, enables layers of the retina to be seen and analyzed with respect to structural changes associated with glaucoma and other blinding eye diseases, such as AMD and diabetic retinopathy. To demonstrate that OCT is a non-invasive, high-speed technology, Carl Zeiss Meditec’s David Speer conducted real-time imaging of both of AEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky’s eyes, the images of which were analyzed by Dr. Wollstein. Mr. Speer also conducted real-time imaging of staff members’ eyes.

“We have come a long way in understanding glaucoma, but we still have much to learn, especially as to why it occurs disproportionately in some populations. —Dr. Wollstein

The first World Glaucoma Day was held on March 6, 2008, and the United States House of Representatives passed H.R. 981, which recognized the event and supported the NEI’s efforts to research the causes of and treatments for glaucoma. Since 2010, the day has expanded into a week of events held worldwide, with all major glaucoma professional societies and research organizations co-sponsoring AEVR’s 2013 event, including:

- American Glaucoma Society (AGS)
- Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO)
- Glaucoma Research Foundation (GRF)
- Optometric Glaucoma Society (OGS)
- The Glaucoma Foundation (TGF)

Since the prior day the House passed a Continuing Resolution to fund the government for the remainder of FY2013 that included the 5.1 percent sequester cut and the Senate was considering its version of a bill, Dr. Wollstein impressed upon Pennsylvania delegation staff which he visited that his research is almost solely funded by NIH/NEI and could potentially be affected by budget cuts or flat funding.

ARVO Advocates Host Members of Congress and Their Staff

On February 18, as a follow-up to the February 7 visit by Dr. Fingert during the ARVO Advocacy Day, Cong. Dave Loebsack spent the President’s holiday finding out how sequestration will hurt Iowa’s medical researchers by hosting a roundtable discussion at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC). The University could lose up to $30 million in research funding due to the federal budget cuts, and since its vision program is primarily funded by the NIH/NEI, the cuts could cause irreversible damage. “You lose the youngest minds from your group when the money is tight and you lose the most innovative projects,” said Edwin Stone, M.D., Ph.D., Director of UIHC Visual Sciences.

On February 6, ARVO Trustee Linda McLoon, Ph.D., who also serves as ARVO’s Advocacy Committee chair, had her staff host representatives of Congressman Tim Walz’s (D-MN) office. The visit resulted from a letter she had written to Cong. Walz, who is the highest ranking enlisted veteran ever to serve in Congress, thanking him for supporting increased defense appropriations for the Vision Trauma Research Program (VTRP). Dr. McLoon, who was traveling that day, commented that, “I got a call out of the blue. You never know when you send an invitation what will happen—but it is important to send an invitation to Members so that they can see your work firsthand.”

From left: Christy Willoughby, Abby McDonald and Sadie Herbert, Ph.D., who work in Dr. McLoon’s lab, along with Shawn Schloesser, Veterans Field Representative, and John Pierce, Veterans Advocate, from the office of Congressman Tim Walz (D-MN)

Cong. Loebsack (center) meets with the UIHC staff