

InSight



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The Power of Collaborative Science

Doheny Tradition Promotes Better AMD Research and Care



The Doheny Eye Institute AMD research team: Jewel Hu, Ph.D., Srinivas Sadda, M.D., Deborah Ferrington, Ph.D., Ram Kannan, Ph.D., Kaustabh Ghosh, Ph.D., Yuhua Zhang, Ph.D., Michael Ip, M.D.

“More minds are better than one” is the mantra that Dr. Stephen J. Ryan often invoked when encouraging medical teamwork. As Doheny Eye Institute’s President for almost 25 years, Dr. Ryan firmly believed in the power of collaborative medicine and research. Today, this practice continues in the search for new and more effective treatments for many ocular diseases, including age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Every month, the scientists of Doheny Eye Institute meet in cohorts to discuss current aspects of their research and offer new observations or questions. They collectively focus on each member’s work, which helps sharpen each area of investigation, and also share mutual challenges,

progress, and ideas to stimulate the conceptual work of the whole cohort. This entire process takes the form of collegial, Socratic dialogue.

Interdisciplinary Research

The leading cause of blindness in older Americans, AMD manifests in two clinically distinct forms. The less common form, advanced neovascular or “wet” AMD, has been treatable for nearly two decades with anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) therapies that help control or reduce the retinal bleeding that causes this form of the disease. However, 85% of AMD cases are the atrophic or “dry” form of the disease caused by the death of the retinal pigment epithelium

(RPE) and subsequent loss of light-sensing photoreceptors.

Only the very recent FDA approval of a drug to treat dry AMD offers the hope of slowing down progression to blindness, but this treatment will not stop or reverse cell damage. This assault on vision is both tragic and pernicious, and the search for effective treatments commands the attention of researchers worldwide – especially here at Doheny.

Doheny’s interdisciplinary AMD team includes researchers Kaustabh Ghosh, Ph.D., Ram Kannan, Ph.D., and Deborah Ferrington, Ph.D., Doheny’s Chief Scientific Officer; innovative retina imaging scientists and engineers Yuhua Zhang, Ph.D., and Jewel Hu, Ph.D.; and clinician scientists Srinivas Sadda, M.D., and Michael Ip, M.D.

“Ultimately, our collaboration aims at achieving better research and patient care,” said Dr. Ferrington, who describes the components of this collaborative process as discovery, innovation, and care.

Discovery

The laboratories of the Principal Investigators research unique aspects of AMD and work to develop novel treatment strategies based on their discoveries.

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Interdisciplinary researcher **Dr. Kaustabh Ghosh**, an expert in the fields of vascular inflammation, mechanobiology, bioengineering, and nanomedicine, is uniquely positioned to better understand the disease process that currently guides the development of AMD treatments. He is investigating how the stiffening of blood vessels of the choroid, the outer retina blood supply, can affect the transport of nutrients and oxygen to the RPE and photoreceptors. His research asks whether such conditions are causative or symptomatic, as well as how to design methods of detecting stiffening to facilitate earlier diagnosis. Treatments targeting stiffening could help reverse AMD's detrimental effects on vascular cells.

The efficacy of several small molecules in regulating mitochondrial function and attenuating oxidative damage in the RPE is the focus of **Dr. Ram Kannan's** research. The mitochondria are the powerhouses of every cell, especially in the RPE, as these cells require large amounts of energy. RPE cells are vulnerable to a range of stressors, including oxidative stress generated as a byproduct of producing energy. Therefore, testing and modeling the effects of oxidative stress is central to his work in identifying small molecules that could protect and boost mitochondrial function.

Dr. Deborah Ferrington studies how an individual's genetic background influences the RPE's response to various physiological stressors, specifically a genetic defect present in approximately 50% of diagnosed AMD patients. Utilizing state-of-the-art technology to make RPE from a patient's skin biopsy, her goal is to determine how this defect correlates with the development of AMD. Future directions include using

these patient-specific RPE to find the optimal drug for each patient, thereby enabling clinicians to move toward a personalized-medicine approach to AMD treatment.

Innovation

One of the world's top imaging innovators, **Dr. Yuhua Zhang** designs sophisticated tools to study the retina that support research, assessments, and diagnoses. Dr. Zhang's advanced engineering efforts have developed systems capable of imaging a patient's eye and resolving both individual photoreceptors and the blood cells flowing through the retina's network of blood vessels. Originally a designer of deep space telescopes, Dr. Zhang turned this expertise toward ocular imaging and patient care by developing one of only five instruments in the world capable of such detailed retinal examination in a living patient.

Dr. Jewel Hu is a Doheny scientist developing algorithms powered by artificial intelligence (AI) to automatically read retinal images rapidly with a high level of accuracy. In the early phases of deployment, the output from these AI algorithms is overseen by human experts to check for errors. As more and more training data is fed to these algorithms, their performance progressively improves until their accuracy and reproducibility exceeds that of even the best human experts. These fully trained AI algorithms can then be deployed into real-world applications, where they can be used to automatically diagnose and monitor various eye diseases.

Care

Rounding out this collaborative cohort, Doheny Eye Institute incorporates the talents of two clinical researchers who contribute the perspective of the

inquiring scientist.

Dr. Srinivas Sadda, a retina specialist and director of artificial intelligence at Doheny, in partnership with Dr. Hu, focuses on deploying manual and AI-based approaches to analyze ophthalmic images and gain new insights into the pathologic processes leading to eye disease. Dr. Sadda has spearheaded the development of an initiative to bring together a consortium of clinical centers who will share their immense retinal image libraries of patients with AMD, enabling a better understanding of its development and progression. In recognition of his expertise and leadership, Dr. Sadda was recently selected as President-elect of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO), the largest and most respected eye and vision research organization in the world.

Dr. Michael Ip studies and implements strategies to deploy new generations of VEGF therapies. A retina research specialist, he also leads Doheny's annual International Retina Symposium and is the medical director of the Doheny Image Reading Center, which supports clinical trials with ophthalmic image analysis.

Individual commitment to a group effort represents an intellectual force multiplier where the productivity of an entire team exceeds the sum of what independent researchers might achieve alone. With this stellar, multidisciplinary team, Doheny continues to be a leader in working toward more breakthroughs in AMD now and in the coming years. In this 75th anniversary year, Dr. Ryan's mantra still guides the Institute's mission to further the conservation, improvement, and restoration of human eyesight. ■

Firmly Focused on the Future



At Doheny Eye Institute, our vision is focused on the future because tomorrow holds our team's next discoveries, insights, treatments, or cures for eye disease. During our 75th anniversary year, it is also good to pause and appreciate those who have helped build our remarkable reputation, as well as to reflect on our recent successes.

In 1944, the sudden blindness of Mrs. Carrie Estelle Doheny, our founder, initiated her quest to establish California's first eye research center. Since then, many stakeholders, including our generous donors, outstanding leaders, accomplished faculty, dedicated staff, engaged community partners and supportive friends, have contributed to and expanded Mrs. Doheny's far-sighted vision for the Institute.

In 1991, I began my tenure here under Stephen Ryan, M.D. As Doheny's President, and for over 25 years until his passing in 2013, Dr. Ryan offered inspired, wise leadership and was instrumental in elevating Doheny to a highly ranked, internationally recognized institute. Today, in affiliation with UCLA Stein Eye Institute, we are a national Top 5 program. Furthermore, his strong belief in collaborative research and clinical practice are embodied in our alumni who continually expand our reputation as they practice the skills gained at Doheny across the globe.

In 2021, we marked another key milestone with the move to our new headquarters in Pasadena, California. In partnership with UCLA, we will soon begin building the Doheny Eye Center UCLA clinic on the first floor, where we will welcome patients by the end of 2024. We look forward to the research synergy that will follow as our research scientists and clinicians work together in the same building!

Mrs. Doheny's mission continues to inspire our course. Her own health crisis, which could have consumed her, instead awakened a desire to help others who faced the same obstacles. Beginning with her vision and dedicated philanthropy, Doheny Eye Institute has achieved a world renowned reputation for outstanding ophthalmology research, education and, through our affiliation with UCLA, the high standard of patient care we are known for today. Her generous spirit launched Doheny on its path "To further the conservation, improvement and restoration of human eyesight."

It is my honor to lead and guide this extraordinary effort. As we celebrate our 75th year, I invite your engagement and continued support of this brilliant mission and effort to keep our vision firmly focused on the future.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marissa Goldberg".

Marissa Goldberg
Chief Executive Officer





Jeff Goldberg, Doheny CEO Marissa Goldberg with Alfred E. Mann Charities trustees Anoosheh Bostani and Michael Dreyer

Mann Charities gives Doheny \$500,000

Doheny Eye Institute has received a \$500,000 unrestricted gift from Alfred E. Mann Charities. This gift will support the ongoing vision research of the Institute. In appreciation, Marissa Goldberg, Doheny's CEO said, "The legacy support of such a visionary physicist, inventor, entrepreneur, and philanthropist will encourage and support our next generation of success." This generous gift has been acknowledged by the naming of the study lounge, located in the institute's Conference Center, as the Alfred E. Mann Charities Study Lounge. In making the gift, Michael Dreyer and Anoosheh Bostani, Trustees of the Alfred E. Mann Charities noted, "Because Mr. Mann was very attuned to issues surrounding eyesight and vision health, our funding of Doheny Eye Institute is a further continuation of his quest to improve eyesight."

Alfred E. Mann, the son of an immigrant grocer, was self-made and went on to become one of the largest donors to higher education and biomedical research in the United States. He founded and mostly funded 17 successful companies. A humanist, who made it a goal to give back for

the benefit of all humankind, his accomplishments created the ability and his values the impetus for his great life-long philanthropy. Trained as a physicist, his early accomplishments were in aerospace including the development of the solar panels which provided electrical power to the first generation of satellites. As his career progressed, his interest, research, and entrepreneurial endeavors turned to biomedical engineering where he focused on treatments for those affected by many conditions including heart disease, diabetes, paralysis, hearing loss, and vision impairment. The results of his research and patents created a wide range of devices and companies that are recognized by many and have touched and improved countless lives.

"Doheny Eye Institute is honored to receive a gift from an organization so well qualified to recognize our excellence in vision research", commented Molly Ann Woods, Doheny's Chief Development Officer, who along with Mr. Jeff Goldberg and Mrs. Marissa Goldberg, worked with Mr. Dreyer and Ms. Bostani to secure the Alfred E. Mann Charities contribution. ■

Reaching Those in Need



A grateful patient in the El Fuerté clinic with Dr. Francis and his son Nathan

Brian Francis, M.D., M.S., a leading expert in the field of glaucoma treatment at Doheny Eye Center UCLA and a Professor in the UCLA Department of Ophthalmology, is as passionate about serving the community as he is about developing novel surgical techniques.

Dr. Francis explains it this way: “Several years ago, I reached a point in my career where I felt the need to look beyond professional development and accomplishments and look towards some of the larger needs in healthcare.”

Five years ago, an expanding awareness of the disparity in healthcare access inspired him to start working with the UCLA Mobile Eye Clinic and the Bruin Vision Project. He has two objectives: first, to reach those who need care and second, to introduce and train the next generation of vision care doctors and advocates.

Two to three days each month, he offers his medical skills or guides community outreach. The UCLA Mobile Eye Clinic visits local, medically underserved communities offering vision care. In partnership with Doheny-UCLA’s Judy Chen, M.D., Assistant Clinical Professor, he serves as an advisor to a group of medical students and faculty that offer full eye exams and reading glasses. The Bruin Vision Project, staffed by UCLA undergraduates, many aspiring to careers in the medical fields, raises vision health awareness at community fairs. Dr. Francis points out, “Many people we meet are often unaware of how to care for their eyes.”

Additionally, he travels to El Fuerté, in Sinaloa, Mexico, for one week each year, to donate his surgical skills. On occasion, his three children, now between the ages of 18 and 21, have come along to assist at the clinic. Dr. Francis models his generous care for others, as well as passing the baton of community engagement to the next generation. ■

Molly Ann Woods Leads Development



This past fall, Doheny Eye Institute welcomed Molly Ann Woods, CFRE, as Chief Development Officer. With Doheny’s move to Pasadena, along with the appointment of our new Chief Scientific Officer

last May, Molly Ann’s arrival places her in a unique, strategic moment to lead all fundraising and communication initiatives in support of Doheny’s expanded vision and goals.

Molly Ann has a special appreciation for Doheny’s mission, sharing that “My mother had glaucoma and my father suffered from age-related macular degeneration, so the work we do here hits close to home.”

With almost three decades of successful fundraising experience at institutions of higher education and nonprofit organizations, she notes it all began with a job during her sophomore year at Temple University. Molly Ann explains, “They needed an assistant for the Alumni Annual Fund, but shortly after I started, I became acting head of the fund when the director left for another job.” She successfully served in several positions of increasing responsibility beyond graduation, and a career in nonprofit fundraising was born.

During the last four years, Molly Ann grew the first private fundraising program for Mental Health America of Los Angeles while serving as their Chief Development & Communications Officer. Her resume demonstrates a sustained record of successes in major gifts, corporate and foundation relations, capital campaigns, and executive board development. Many recognized Los Angeles institutions have benefitted from her talents and energies, including the engineering schools of UCLA, Loyola Marymount University, and Cal State LA, as well as the creative programs at Art Center College of Design.

Being a natural people person who enjoys hearing others’ stories brings joy to her work as well as to everyone she meets. If you have questions regarding gifts to Doheny Eye Institute, or wish to meet with Molly Ann, we encourage you to email her at MWoods@doheny.org or call her at (323) 342-7111.

Generosity Blooms at the Luminaires Gala



Top L-R: The Luminaires Gala Committee, Marissa Goldberg CEO, Deborah Ferrington CSO, and Hilary Crahan Gala Chair
Bottom L-R: Marissa Goldberg and Luminaires President Fran Biles welcomes guests, the fashion show presented by Pearls Boutique, San Marino

“Everything’s Coming up Roses” described the lively spirit as over 230 Luminaires and guests gathered for this year’s gala at The California Club in downtown Los Angeles on Thursday, March 23rd. This theme proved perfect for what turned out to be a colorful, bloom-filled spring, as well as a wonderfully bountiful fundraiser for Doheny Eye Institute.

After enjoying time circulating through the gift boutique, guests were welcomed by The Luminaires’ President Fran Biles and Doheny Eye Institute CEO Marissa Goldberg. The playful enthusiasm exuded by Doheny Eye Institute Chief Scientific Officer Deborah Ferrington, Ph.D., during her role drawing names in the opportunity raffle elicited smiles

all around. Then, after enjoying lunch, everyone’s attention turned to the runway for the high-energy fashion show featuring collections from Pearls Boutique of San Marino and Newport Beach.

A key element to making this event so successful was Benefit Chair Hilary Crahan’s attention to every detail, from the vibrant centerpieces to a display of shimmering summer fashions, which filled the ballroom to capacity with delighted guests.

Ultimately, generosity flowered, with over \$150,000 raised. Now in its 49th year, The Luminaires have successfully raised over \$8.5 million to support vision research at Doheny Eye Institute. ■

Peering into the Eye



“My life’s passion is understanding how retinal cells enable us to see,” says

Dr. Steven Barnes with an excited twinkle in his eye as he describes the focus of his research. His statement is as modest as it is succinct.

Steven Barnes, Ph.D., a neurobiologist and ion channel biophysicist, is part of a tight core of basic research scientists at Doheny Eye Institute studying the functions of vision at the

cellular and sub-cellular level. Also, a professor in the UCLA Departments of Ophthalmology and Neurobiology, Dr. Barnes’ expertise lies in the neurophysiology of the retina and synaptic signaling mechanisms. Barnes points out that his research permits understanding of “how healthy cells function and reveals the patterns of cells not working properly.” His findings support Doheny’s sight-saving research into Leber hereditary optic neuropathy (LHON), macular degeneration, and glaucoma.

When we peer into an eye, in a way we are looking into the brain. The retina, located at the back of the eye, is made up of a thin layer of central nervous system tissue. Composed of rod and cone photoreceptors, along with complex neural circuits formed by other retinal neurons, connect to the optic nerve via ganglion cell axons. This exquisite network of cells converts and processes patterns of light entering the eye into the chemical and electrical signals that the brain interprets as the sense we call sight. This rapid and data-intensive processing demands extremely high levels of cellular energy or, as Barnes explains, “These retinal neurons can be the most energy-expensive cells in the body.”

The energy fragility of the retinal cells makes them especially vulnerable to the consequences of genetic abnormality and the deterioration due to aging. Barnes’ studies draw him inside the cell to the mitochondria, the powerhouse contained within every cell, and the signaling processes through which cells communicate with each other and relay the information critical to vision.

Dr. Barnes is focused on several projects related to LHON. Most commonly diagnosed in men in their late teens, this rare, genetically inherited disease occurs when the retinal ganglion cells (RGC), which are part of the network connecting photoreceptors to the brain, suffer total cellular failure, leading to blindness. In collaboration with Doheny’s Alfredo Sadun, M.D., Ph.D., Dr. Barnes’ research on RGC excitability examines the abnormal signaling processes in LHON as the cells approach failure and compares them with the inherent self-control present in healthy RGC. Dr. Barnes and Dr. Sadun currently have a high-impact paper just accepted for publication in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that presents their original and remarkable research into these signaling failures underlying LHON.

Dr. Barnes is also working with Xian-Jie Yang, Ph.D. at UCLA to study the potential of using retinal organoids as replacements for dead RGCs. This exciting possibility utilizes stem cell science and CRISPR gene editing to grow healthy retinal neurons and RGCs from a patient’s own skin cells. ■

NIH Research Grants

With an annual budget of more than \$40 billion, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funds the work of over 300,000 scientists across all medical specialties. NIH funding seeks to improve health outcomes by facilitating fundamental creative discoveries, innovative research strategies, and their applications.

Each year, on average, it is estimated that only 1 in 7 grant applications are approved for funding.



This funding supports research work performed at over 2,500 hospitals, medical schools, universities, and other research institutions around the country. The Research Project (R01) grant is an award created to support mature research projects that are hypothesis-driven with strong preliminary data.

Currently, Doheny Eye Institute holds 7 NIH R01 grants.



Dr. Kaustabh Ghosh Honored with Catalyst Award

Kaustabh Ghosh, Ph.D., Principal Investigator at Doheny Eye Institute and Associate Professor of Ophthalmology in the UCLA Department of Ophthalmology, was recently recognized by Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB) and the International Retinal Research Foundation (IRRF) with the Catalyst Award for Innovative Approaches for Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD).

“Our team is very grateful to have received the prestigious RPB/IRRF Catalyst award as it is a testament to the high impact that unique, multidisciplinary approaches might have in addressing long-standing complex problems like AMD,” offered Dr. Ghosh.

The Catalyst Award from RPB and IRRF, two of the preeminent nonprofits supporting eye research, provides \$300,000 to researchers who are working on novel ways to understand or treat AMD. Further findings from these proposed studies are expected to generate key preliminary data for the submission of larger National Institutes of Health (NIH) R01 grant applications that are required for a more comprehensive study of this important topic.

Dr. Ghosh’s work exemplifies what it means to be multidisciplinary, integrating the principles and techniques of physical, biological, and medical sciences to clarify the problem of vascular loss in the eye in early AMD. His approach is distinct from the traditional emphasis on the role of genetic or biochemical cues in AMD. “In other words, we are looking at the same clinical problem but from an entirely new perspective,” said Dr. Ghosh.

Dry (atropic) AMD affects 85% of the patients diagnosed with the disease and there are currently limited therapies. Because it is the leading cause of blindness in older Americans, there is a significant need to recognize, understand, and inhibit AMD progression at the earliest stages. Early AMD, which most often is symptomless, is marked by significant degeneration and vascular stiffness of blood vessels in the outer retinal tissue called the choroid. Vascular stiffness, which alters blood flow and the exchange of nutrients and oxygen from the blood to the tissue, is increasingly being recognized as a major contributor to other debilitating conditions, such as cancer, atherosclerosis, and lung edema.

Inspired by these findings from non-ocular diseases, Dr. Ghosh set out to investigate whether and how changes in vascular stiffness contribute to the onset or progression of AMD. “In essence, increased vascular stiffness in the eye may be more than symptomatic of AMD, but also a key causative factor,” said Dr. Ghosh.

There is significant research to accomplish before the full clinical implications of this work can be realized, including the development of imaging tools to non-invasively measure vascular stiffness. However, one goal would be to both monitor and block vascular stiffening as an early intervention in treating AMD. ■

“We are looking at the same clinical problem but from an entirely new perspective.”

Dr. Victoria Tseng Receives Career Development Award

In January, **Victoria Tseng, M.D., Ph.D.**, an ophthalmologist and epidemiologist specializing in glaucoma treatment at Doheny Eye Center UCLA and an Assistant Professor in the UCLA Department of Ophthalmology, was recognized by Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB) with the Career Development Award.

“I was honored to be recognized by this prestigious organization for my glaucoma research,” Dr. Tseng remarked.

This recognition is intended to help support promising early career ophthalmology faculty who have demonstrated their potential for independent research. The \$350,000 grant from RPB, a leading nonprofit organization supporting eye research, is payable over four years. The RPB grant will allow Dr. Tseng to further refine and expand her research program.

The goal of Dr. Tseng’s research is to detect and treat glaucoma earlier by more effectively identifying people with an increased propensity for the disease and patterns of contributing social factors. Her study will correlate large data sets to search for individual and structural social determinants that provide possible explanations for the differing amounts of glaucoma in varied population groups. This study will use publicly available information from the Medicare database and the U.S. Census. Correlations will be sought between the Medicare disease codes for glaucoma and regional census data considering age, gender, race and ethnicity, income, and additional neighborhood-level factors in the localities where the disease has been found most often. Since glaucoma is a silent disease whereby peripheral vision is lost first, early detection and treatment can prevent significant damage to a patient’s vision.

Since high school, Dr. Tseng has known she wanted to be a doctor. Her goal to practice medicine led her to enroll in an eight-year, joint undergraduate and medical program at Brown University. Upon graduation in 2012, she headed to UCLA for her internship, residency, and fellowship. The unique structure of Brown’s joint program offered her a range of diverse educational opportunities, which included social science studies. These classes primed her for a subsequent Ph.D. in epidemiology, which she completed in 2016 at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health.

Committed to education excellence for future ophthalmologists, as Associate Program Director for the UCLA Ophthalmology Residency, Dr. Tseng also teaches ophthalmology residents at the Olive View-UCLA Medical Center. ■



“I was honored to be recognized by this prestigious organization for my glaucoma research.”

What is RPB?

Research to Prevent Blindness was founded in 1960 by **Dr. Jules Stein** to fund, coordinate, and promote vision research in the United States.

Since then, RPB has distributed **hundreds of millions of dollars** to these medical institutions and has consistently played crucial roles in the development of today’s vibrant vision research community.

Doheny CME Debuts Conference Center



Top L-R: Hugo Hsu, M.D., Mark Borchert, M.D., Russell Van Gelder, M.D., Ph.D.
Bottom: Bibiana Jin Reiser, M.D., M.S

On Saturday, March 25, Doheny Eye Institute hosted the 52nd Annual Continuing Medical Education (CME) Conference at its new on-campus conference facility. This marked an exciting new era of bringing the conference “home,” following many years of the CME program being convened at off-site locations.

Hosted by Hugo Y. Hsu, M.D., Course Director, and Ben Bert, M.D., CME Program Director, the conference welcomed nearly 100 attendees for a day of research and clinical presentations by Doheny alumni, Doheny-UCLA faculty, and UCLA Stein faculty. During the day, 17 presentations provided state-of-the-art, breakthrough information on diagnosing and treating macular degeneration, glaucoma, and other ocular disorders affecting both adult and pediatric patients.

Russell Van Gelder, M.D., Ph.D., from the University of Washington presented the Irvine Memorial Lecture, while Mark Borchert, M.D., from Children’s Hospital Los Angeles presented as this year’s Doheny Distinguished Alumnus. The Distinguished Alumnus Award is given to those who trained at Doheny and have made significant contributions to the welfare of ophthalmology.

Dr. Mark Borchert’s Distinguished Alumnus recognition was later celebrated at Doheny’s Annual Alumni Dinner held at the Annandale Golf Club in Pasadena following the conference. ■

RIMR 2023 Conference Meets

In late March, the Stephen J. Ryan Initiative for Macular Research (RIMR) gathered 100 invited experts to explore the open questions, obstacles, and possible paths of investigation needed to develop treatments for dry (atrophic) age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Named in memory of Dr. Ryan, longtime President of Doheny Eye Institute and an internationally recognized retina expert, the conference has met annually since 2009. This year, the interdisciplinary macular research program, hosted by Doheny Eye Institute and led by RIMR Program Director, Srinivas Sadda, M.D., convened for three days at the Beckman Center in Irvine, California.

Atrophic AMD, commonly known as dry AMD, accounts for more than 85% of AMD cases, and affects more than 10 million Americans. Despite being the number one cause of vision impairment and blindness in older Americans, limited effective treatments are currently available for this form of AMD.

Each year, the RIMR conference employs a process of collegial dialogue and iterative discourse first inspired by Dr. Ryan and further evolved by input from participants year after year. Eight task groups explored emerging technologies, discoveries, and ideas on eight separate challenges currently facing AMD investigators. This stimulating, interdisciplinary exchange of ideas and perspectives encourages new thinking and collaborations across the traditional boundaries of institutions, specialties, basic science, and clinical care to better advance the research.

On Saturday, April 8, the participants regrouped virtually for a half-day review of each group’s discussions, findings, ideas, and recommendations for research paths to pursue in the coming years. These novel approaches were captured by eight attending science writers, one per task group, and then shared in a combined report made available to all RIMR attendees. The next conference will take place from April 2 - 4, 2024.

In 2023, the David R. Hinton, M.D. Scholarship Program was launched, enabling eight early career scientists and clinicians to attend the RIMR conference. Dr. Hinton, who passed away in 2022, was instrumental in developing the RIMR program and a devoted mentor to the next generation of researchers. Hinton Scholarships will continue annually in his honor. ■



The Ferrington task group in session at RIMR 2023

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