Quitting is not an option

Pioneering vision surgery helps New Jersey boy see clearly

Quitting was never an option for 8-year-old Thomas Walkup. Even though congenital nystagmus caused his eye muscles to pulse continually and severely limited his vision, the youngster insisted that he wanted to continue wrestling and playing T-ball. Unfortunately, because Thomas could not focus on the ball, playing baseball was not a reality.

Patients with congenital nystagmus have rapid and repetitive eye movements; the eyes move involuntarily side to side, up and down or in circles, making it impossible for them to gaze at an object steadily. Children with the condition typically suffer dramatic impacts on their educational and social development.

In fact, Thomas’ mother, Susan Banks, was told he would not be able to play sports or drive a car, and was destined to struggle in school because he had such difficulty reading. Also, Banks worried about how Thomas, with his rapidly darting eyes, would be treated by his peers.

Thomas Walkup

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Thomas Walkup meets Mike Trout. Photo courtesy of Angels Baseball.

To view videos detailing Thomas’ journey to better vision, visit ucirvinehealth.org/thomas

Innovative therapy, advanced research herald a bright future

The future has never been brighter at Gavin Herbert Eye Institute. With the completion of our new building, we have a special opportunity to advance ophthalmic research and take our work to the next level. As we maintain our global presence, we continue to develop innovative and accessible therapies for millions of people worldwide who are on the verge of losing their sight.

As part of that mission, we are committed to advancing translational vision research. That includes recruiting and retaining exceptional scientists who have a keen understanding and passion for expediting the discovery of new diagnostic tools and treatments using a multidisciplinary, highly collaborative, “bench-to-bedside” approach.

Our emphasis is on enhancing the health and well-being of individuals and the community with a focus on cross-functional collaborations between researchers and clinicians, leveraging new technology and data analysis tools, and increasing the speed at which new treatments reach patients. Our goal is to take basic research findings and test them in a clinical setting, allowing new interventions to become standard practice in patient care.

Integrating the institute’s advances in chemistry, genomics and diagnostics, biomedical imaging and innovative therapeutics will enable us to optimize these sub-disciplines and serve as a model of modern medical exploration. As we work to ensure the institute’s impact, we are positioned to make a real difference in the lives of generations to come.

Sincerely,

Roger Steinhert, MD
Director, Gavin Herbert Eye Institute
Irving H. Leopold Professor of Ophthalmology

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Jing Yang, MD, PhD
Institute remembers pioneering ophthalmologists

Two world-renowned ophthalmology surgeons and innovators passed away in the past year, but their legacies live on at the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute

Dr. Robert M. Sinskey, a cataract surgery pioneer who was especially devoted to eliminating blindness in children, is memorialized in the institute’s Loraine and Robert Sinskey, MD, Pediatric Vision Center. Dr. Richard Kratz, who had more than 60 years of experience as a clinical professor of ophthalmology at UC Irvine and in private practice, is remembered through the institute’s Richard Kratz, MD, DSc, Operating Room.

In addition to their work with the institute, both men gave generously to the Shine the Light capital campaign in support of the newly completed building, recalled Dr. Roger Steinert, institute director. “Both Dr. Kratz and Dr. Sinskey were pioneers in cataract surgery from the 1970s to the 1990s,” Steinert explained. “They were internationally known for their innovations in teaching and for their contributions to the science of cataract surgery. Many patients — easily in the millions — have benefited directly and indirectly from their teaching and innovation. They took the field of cataract surgery to entirely new levels.”

Kratz was a longtime supporter of many areas of UC Irvine and served as a key member of the committee that guided the establishment of the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute. “He created an ongoing legacy of continued patient care and teaching facilities for generations to come, thanks to his ideas and insight,” Steinert said.

Sinskey developed new instruments and techniques used in cataract surgery and taught thousands of surgeons to use them. “Beyond that, he set up and funded a project to launch a hospital in Ethiopia that has had enormous impact in helping eliminate blindness in the developing nations,” Steinert noted. In his last years, Sinskey reached out to Steinert and GHEI to launch a revolutionary pediatric surgery for nystagmus — a condition in which the eyes make involuntary, repetitive movements. They enlisted GHEI professor Dr. Robert Lingua, who built on Sinskey’s initiative and is now a leader in improving and reversing congenital nystagmus.

The results of today’s ophthalmologic surgeries are “nothing short of miraculous,” Steinert said, thanks to the efforts of both Kratz and Sinskey. “They proved that there is always room for improvement, and we are committed to take whatever we’re doing and make it better,” he said. “We must never cease to progress. We are honored by their legacy.”

Noted scientist continues groundbreaking research on neutrophils

Dr. Eric Pearlman has traveled the world studying the bacterial and fungal infections that cause corneal diseases (termed microbial keratitis). He studied river blindness in sub-Saharan Africa and fungal keratitis in south India. Fungal keratitis is also prevalent in the U.S., where it is associated with contact lens wear.

Recently named director of the UC Irvine Institute for Immunology and a professor in the departments of Ophthalmology and Physiology & Biophysics, Pearlman is moving his ongoing research toward new and effective treatments for patients. “It’s an exciting time,” he said. “We have National Eye Institute funding to continue research in new directions that will yield novel therapeutic agents to treat different blinding diseases.”

His research focuses on the regulatory role of neutrophils in bacterial and fungal infections, especially corneal infections that lead to visual impairment and blindness. Neutrophils are the most abundant type of white blood cells in mammals and form an essential part of the immune system.

As part of his 20-year tenure as a professor and director of research at Case Western Reserve University, Pearlman was senior author of a study documenting the discovery of a novel population of neutrophils that have an enhanced microbial killing ability and are thereby better able to control infection. The study was published last year in the prestigious journal Nature Immunology.
Surgeon notes innovations in treatment for dry eye disease

Dry eye disease may sound no worse than a minor irritation, but it can cause major suffering.

Dr. Matthew Wade, a fellowship-trained eye surgeon and instructor in the UC Irvine School of Medicine, says innovations in treatment are expanding as understanding of dry eye disease increases.

Baseline treatments of dry eye disease include environmental modifications, dietary changes, lubricating treatments and medication adjustments. Two new treatments for dry eye disease include autologous serum and thermal pulsation (Lipiflow).

Serum drops are extracted from a patient’s blood and turned into an eye drop. The growth factors, vitamins and antibodies present in serum are the same as those in natural tears. Serum drops help many patients who have not responded to other treatments. Lipiflow is an FDA-approved in-office treatment for meibomian gland dysfunction.

What does dry eye disease feel like? Wade said patients’ symptoms vary, but can include the sensation of having a foreign body in the eye, tearing, redness, burning, eye fatigue and blurred vision. Because these symptoms overlap with signs of other ocular conditions, an evaluation with an eye care provider can clarify cause and treatment options.

Symptoms of dry eye disease affect vision and ocular comfort and can be worsened by many medications, environmental factors, hormones and modern lifestyles that have us focusing our eyes on cell phones, computer screens and television.

“While the name ‘dry eye disease’ may sound innocuous, the symptoms of dry eye disease can be very severe in many patients,” Wade explained. “If you suffer from dry eye disease, you are not alone. Today there are many treatment options that can be very helpful. Significant research is underway to continue improving our ability to treat dry eye disease.”

Endowing our future

Help continue our work through a gift to our endowment.

The purpose of our endowment is to financially sustain the mission and work of Gavin Herbert Eye Institute at UC Irvine. You can make a significant contribution to endow our future — and it’s easier than you might think.

Here are a number of charitable gift and estate planning strategies that can benefit you and build our endowment:

• Charitable bequests
• Beneficiary designations
• Charitable life estate
• Charitable life income plans

To learn more about how you can make a significant gift to endow our future, please contact us:

949-824-6454 | www.plannedgiving.uci.edu

It’s easier than you might think.

CLINICAL HIGHLIGHT

Matthew Wade, MD

NEWS IN BRIEF

Dedicated clinical professor retires

Dr. Linda S. Lippa, clinical professor of ophthalmology, will retire this fall after 21 years of service to the UC Irvine School of Medicine.

As medical student education director for the Department of Ophthalmology for many years, Lippa has a passion for teaching and has played a pivotal role in ophthalmology training in the medical school curriculum. Her research interests include ocular tumors, inflammatory diseases of the eye and orbit, and glaucoma.

“I have watched with pride as the students and residents I have taught now make their mark as practitioners and academic faculty, not only in ophthalmology, but in every discipline of medicine,” Lippa said.

“The patients I have been privileged to care for over the years have given back heartwarming affection in kind, and I will truly miss them.”

Linda S. Lippa, MD

Foundation gift establishes new research programs

A recent $2-million gift from the Discovery Eye Foundation will establish two centers – The Discovery Cornea Center and The Discovery Retina Center – which, in addition to active research, will provide outreach and education programs at the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute for patients with degenerative eye diseases. Based in Los Angeles, the Discovery Eye Foundation supports research, education, advocacy and treatment of sight-threatening eye diseases.

One area of focus is Keratoconus, a disease that causes the cornea to thin and change to a more conical shape than its normal gradual curve, greatly affecting vision. Another area of emphasis is age-related macular degeneration, which results in a loss of central vision because of damage to the macula at the back of the eye.

Websites, lectures, conferences, a toll-free help line and newsletters will provide information and ways to cope with the diseases, updated research and clinical trial information, online support groups, live support groups and educational programs.

Event calendar

2015 monthly community lecture series

Gavin Herbert Eye Institute will offer free lectures about eye health. No registration is required, but seating is limited. Join us! Parking is complimentary.

Third Thursday of each month | 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Gavin Herbert Eye Institute 850 Health Sciences Road 3rd floor Conference Room Irvine, CA 92697

Nov. 19, 2015 Eyelid Sags and Bags | Dr. Jeremiah Tao
Dec. 17, 2015 Diabetic Eye | Dr. Mitul Mehta

For more information about the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute Lecture Series, please contact marketing director Archana Kaushal at aakaushal@uci.edu.
SPECIAL FEATURE

Optical shop accepts flex spending plans

An eye exam and new glasses are a great way to use your Health Flexible Spending Account. By making your appointment today, you can avoid the last-minute rush to use any remaining funds in your Health FSA account.

Call 949-824-3260 today to make an appointment.
Walk-ins are welcome.

Make an appointment
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Irvine, CA 92697
Appointments: 949-824-2020
Optical Shop: 949-824-3260

UC Irvine Medical Center
101 The City Drive South, Pavilion II
Orange, CA 92868
Appointments: 714-456-7183

Make a donation
To learn more about how you can support us, contact Janice Briggs, executive director of development, at 949-824-0091 or jbriggs@uci.edu

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