Dr. James L. Hargiss has been an icon in the field of ophthalmology. In 1951, Dr. James L. Hargiss joined the University of Washington faculty and has continued his contributions ever since. Dr. Hargiss’ greatest contributions to the field, among all of his achievements, has been his teaching and mentorship to the residents and fellows at the Department of Ophthalmology; and will ensure that our department will always have the resources it needs to train first-rate ophthalmologists in the future. Dr. Hargiss’ legacy is that of a compassionate and competent surgeon, a dedicated teacher, and a person whose work has greatly contributed to our understanding of ophthalmology.

The Color Vision Center of Excellence offers a comprehensive series of color vision tests, including genetic testing. The center also has the only anomaloscope in the Pacific Northwest. Most people may be more familiar with the test showing dotted pictures (Ishihara plate) but the anomaloscope provides the most accurate means of testing the degree of color blindness. The Center is located at the UW Medical Center.

"We have an in-depth understanding of color vision and how a deficiency could affect specific jobs. We also can tell parents about possible consequences of their child's failed color-vision test," said Maureen Neitz. The Color Vision Center of Excellence also offers a comprehensive series of color vision tests, including genetic testing.

"Color blindness is the most common inherited vision disorder in the world. In the Puget Sound area alone over 100,000 men (and several thousand women) are affected by some form of color vision deficiency. While for many color blindness is a nuisance, for some individuals having perfect color vision is essential. Pilots, law enforcement officers, firefighters, and soldiers rely on normal color vision to do their jobs. Entry into these fields frequently requires passing an array of color vision tests. Until now, there has been no single facility that can perform the full breadth of color vision testing in the Northwest.

With the opening of the UW Medicine Eye Institute Color Vision Center of Excellence at University of Washington Medical Center, such a center is now available in Washington. The impetus prompting the opening of the Center is the genetic work conducted by Departments of Ophthalmology researchers, Drs. Jay and Maureen Neitz. Jay is the Bishop Professor of Ophthalmology, and Maureen the Ray Hill Professor of Ophthalmology. The Neitzes have devoted their professional lives to the understanding of color vision, and have identified many of the genetic defects leading to color blindness. "We have an in-depth understanding of color vision and how a deficiency could affect specific jobs. We also can tell parents about possible consequences of their child's failed color-vision test," said Maureen Neitz.

The Color Vision Center of Excellence engages in translational medical research. Dr. Neitz is one of the few people who can study both mouse models and patient samples to extend the information gained from one to the other.

There are more than 250 different forms of color blindness, each affecting one or the other of the two systems that humans see in. The Color Vision Center of Excellence builds on the terrific translational divide to advance the state of knowledge in ophthalmology, both here in Seattle and in the wider world. We appreciate the opportunity to let you know of our progress.

Russel Van Gelder, MD, PhD
Director, UW Medicine Eye Institute

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An advance in vision restoration

Researchers from the Department of Ophthalmology in collaboration with scientists from University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Munich, have identified a chemical that temporarily restores some sight to blind animals.

The chemical, called AAQ, is able to make cells in the eye that are not normally responsive to light sensitive. The cells include the neurons of the inner part of the retina, which are spared in retinal degenerations like macular degeneration and retinitis pigmentosa.

The UW team, including resident Jack Scherer, MD, and postdoctoral fellow Joe Nmaugut, PhD, working in the laboratory of Ophthalmology Professor Russell N. Van Gelder, MD, PhD (Boyd K. Rusczy Chao), showed that AAQ could restore light sensitivity to retinas from blind mice in tissue culture. The group then showed that small amounts of the chemical injected into the eyes of mice with genetic retinal degeneration restored photopic light responses and behavioral responses to light.

“This is an exciting advance in the field of vision restoration,” says Dr. Van Gelder. “The ‘chemical reinnervation’ approach now joins electronic chips, stem cell therapies, and gene therapy as a way to try to treat blindness from retinal degeneration. We will need to show these compounds are safe, and that they will work in people the way they do in mice. But this is an exciting time to be working in this field.”

The work was published in the July 25th issue of the journal Neuron.

Core Clinical Faculty

A multi-specialty group treating all eye diseases and vision disorders

Claire Angel, OD
Optometric Services

Francine Baran, MD
Pediatric Ophthalmology, Strabismus

Holly Chang, MD
Oculoplastic & Orbital Surgery

Jennifer Chao, MD, PhD
Vitreoretinal Disease and Surgery

Philip Chen, MD
Glaucoma

Courtney Francis, MD
Neon Ophthalmology, Strabismus

Eissa Hanna, MD
Comprehensive Ophthalmology

Erin Herlihy, MD
Pediatric Ophthalmology, Strabismus

Jean-Amsalim, MD
Oculoplastic & Orbital Surgery

Robert Kalina, MD
Professor Emeritus

William Seider, MD
Vitreoretinal Disease and Surgery, Ophthalmic Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery

Deborah Lam, MD
Comprehensive Ophthalmology

Bryan Lee, MD, JD
Cornea and External Disease

Jennifer Lee, MD
Comprehensive Ophthalmology

Thilea Leveque, MD, MPH
Comprehensive Ophthalmology

Raghu Mudumbai, MD
Neon Ophthalmology, Strabismus

Richard Musser, MD
Vitreoretinal Disease and Surgery

James Orcutt, MD, PhD
Neon Ophthalmology, Oculoplastic & Orbital Surgery

Nancy Ross, OD
Optometric Services, Refractive Surgery

Tsun Heung Shen, MD, PhD
Retinal Surgery, Cornea and External Disease

Mark Slabaugh, MD
Glaucoma

Pantla Taravat, MD
Comprehensive Ophthalmology

James Troop, OD, PhD
Optometric Services

Russell N. Van Gelder, MD, PhD
Uveitis and Ocular Inflammation

Arma Vemulakonda, MD
Vitreoretinal Disease and Surgery

Avery Weiss, MD
Pediatric Ophthalmology, Strabismus

Michael Wu, MD
Cornea and External Disease

Jennifer Yu, MD, PhD
Comprehensive Ophthalmology

MODERN MEDICINE OF THE EYE

A series of free brown bag lunch lectures
given by members of the UW Medicine Eye Institute

As an academic medical center we endeavor to promote a culture of education for members of our community, as well as our faculty and staff. Community members are integral to a reciprocal learning environment and to our success as teachers, learners, and healers. The lectures take place from 12:00pm-1:00pm in the Eye Institute, 7th Floor Conference Room at 908 Jefferson Street. Join us for one or all of the lectures. Feel free to bring your lunch!

September 20, 2012
From trauma scene to beauty queen: what disfigurement and disease teach us about aesthetic surgery
Holly Chang, MD

October 25, 2012
Glaucoma: management dilemmas and newly developed imaging solutions
Murray Johnston, MD & Mark Slabaugh, MD

November 15, 2012
Color Blindness: what is it and can it be improved?
Pricia Taravati, MD

December 13, 2012
"Would you like fries with your LASIK surgery?"
Bryan Lee, MD, JD

January 24, 2013
Traumatic eye injury: treatment & prevention
Elsa Hanna, MD

The Eye Institute Welcomes Newest Community Advisory Board Members

The UW Medicine Eye Institute has, as its mission, the alleviation of suffering from eye disease in our community and the wider world. In Fall 2011 a Community Advisory Board was formed for the purposes of raising awareness in the community about our programs and to introduce new people to the UW Medicine Eye Institute; to broaden our outreach; to share with the community our most recent research projects; to provide advice on important issues and participate in events; and to work on projects that raise money for research and patient care. The Eye Institute and CAB are excited to introduce our newest board members for 2012-2013:

Dr. Melvin and Nanette Freeman
Melvin Freeman, MD, FACS, a Seattle native, is a graduate of the University of Washington School of Medicine. He completed his training in ophthalmology at Barnes Hospital/Washington University and Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary/Harvard Medical School. He was in the private practice of ophthalmology in Seattle and was a volunteer Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Washington. Nanette Freeman, a Whelling, West Virginia native, is a retired Certified Public Accountant, having worked for national and local accounting firms, and in her own private accounting practice in Bellevue.

Christopher & Alida Latham
Christopher is retired from a 40 year career in Information Systems management and consulting. His work ranged from national financial institutions to the University of Washington. His education includes a BA in Anthropology and graduate study in Computer Science.

Alida and her husband have traveled extensively in remote regions of the world, driven by an interest in collecting tribal art and artifacts. As a result of these travels, she has documented many peoples and places, which led to a stock photography contract with Getty Images in 1996. The Lathams share an interest in philanthropic activities and support a wide range of non-profit and governmental efforts both local and world-wide.

Robert J. Stevens
Robert J. Stevens retired from Novartis/Alcon Laboratories at the end of March 2012, just short of 35 years of service. For the last 23 years he was head of Research and Design for surgical products in the field of ophthalmology. During this time the technology Alcon brought to the market significantly impacted the practice of medicine. Stevens has a Masters in Clinical Microbiology from the University of Washington. His early work experience was at Harborview Medical Center as a microbiologist. Originally from Seattle, Robert migrated to Texas, and is now happy to be back home.