Global Impact

In the tradition of trailblazers Al Sommer and David Paton, Wilmer’s researchers are exporting their expertise to save the sight of millions around the world.
As see it

Dear Wilmer Friends and Family,

If there was ever a time that our nation needed academic medical centers to address our societal needs for more cost-effective, patient-centered care, that time is now.

Here is what Wilmer is doing to respond:

> Our Call Center (410-955-5080) allows referring physicians and patients to call a single number and be offered convenient appointments at one of our seven locations around Maryland; patients with urgent problems are seen the same day.

> Our divisions continue to attract the best and brightest. Among those that have added additional sub-specialists are Pediatric Ophthalmology, Retina, Uveitis, Cornea, Oculoplastic and Reconstructive Surgery, and Glaucoma.

> Our patient satisfaction scores continue upward, with our surgery patients consistently ranking us in the top decile nationally.

> The largest vision research program in the world continues to grow here at Wilmer, in our new Robert H. Smith Building. Two startup companies, based on inventions by Wilmer faculty, are working to develop better ways to deliver medications and treat infections and diseases like macular degeneration.

> Our Oculoplastics Division has recently shown that the cost at Wilmer to repair complex orbital fractures, in which the bones around the eye are damaged from trauma, is half the average cost statewide.

> Our ophthalmology residents have an unparalleled educational experience, including elective rotations in India, Africa, and other parts of the world. This year, Wilmer had its 103rd trainee accept an appointment as department chair.

> This year, Wilmer will dedicate its 32nd endowed professorship, thanks to the generosity of our donors.

We realize that some forces are out of our control. This summer Wilmer experienced an earthquake and a hurricane in the same week! Federal government debt is projected to result in declining payments for patient care and reduced funding for research, while the gyrating stock market may mean less philanthropic support. But what Wilmer can do is continue to provide the best, most timely, and cost-effective care for our patients; work on research to develop better cures or preventions for eye disease; and focus on training the most brilliant and best-prepared new doctors and scientists. This is the “secret” that has allowed Wilmer to advance continuously over 86 years, even during the Great Depression, many recessions, and two world wars.

Peter J. McDonnell, MD
William Holland Wilmer Professor and Director
Stephen J. Ryan ’65, an internationally recognized expert in the field of retinal diseases and ocular trauma, and former faculty member at the Wilmer Institute, has added a new accolade to his long list of honors: a Johns Hopkins Distinguished Alumnus Award.

Ryan’s contributions to the field of ophthalmology are varied and impressive. Currently the president of the Doheny Eye Institute, an affiliate of the University of Southern California, Ryan served for 13 years as dean of USC’s Keck School of Medicine (1991–2004).

During his tenure as dean, overall research funding increased from $72 million in 1993 to $160 million in 2003. A $110 million naming gift from the W.M. Keck Foundation was the largest gift to a medical school up to that time. A new, innovative medical student curriculum was introduced. And the Keck School established a joint MD/PhD program with Caltech.

In 2004, Ryan returned full time to head the Doheny Eye Institute, a post he had held earlier in his career, and he continues to head an active research laboratory and to serve as the Grace and Emery Beardsley Professor of Ophthalmology at USC.

“This is the most exciting time in history to be in vision research,” notes Ryan, who is the founding president of the National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research (NAEVR). He has provided congressional testimony on numerous occasions in support of the National Institutes of Health and the National Eye Institute, where he served on the National Advisory Eye Council.

In the years since Ryan left Johns Hopkins, where he completed his residency and served as assistant and associate professor, he has maintained close ties to his alma mater. In 2005 he provided a leadership gift to endow the Assistant Chief of Service (ACS) position at Wilmer—a post that he recognized as being “vital” to the education of Wilmer’s medical residents.

The gift drew grateful praise from Wilmer director Peter J. McDonnell, “Dr. Stephen Ryan exemplifies the goal of the Wilmer Residency program: producing outstanding clinician-scientists who become leaders in their fields—from patient care and research to education and national service organizations,” said McDonnell.

Ryan is a member of numerous ophthalmologic organizations and has served as president of a number of them. As a board member of the International Council of Ophthalmology, he has organized and chaired the Scientific Program Committee for the last three World Ophthalmology Congresses.

Stephen J. Ryan Jr., MD ’65, with Wilmer director Peter J. McDonnell
Global Impact

Inspired by pioneering scientists Al Sommer and David Paton, whose work around the world has saved the sight of millions, Wilmer’s researchers are exporting their expertise across the globe—from Central and South America to remote regions in Africa and Asia.

By Marlene England
In 1976, when Al Sommer, MD, MHS, was packing his bags for the Cicendo Eye Hospital in Indonesia, some of his colleagues thought he was making a big mistake. He had just finished his residency at Wilmer, after earning his MPH in epidemiology from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. His skill as a physician and a researcher, combined with his passion for global health issues, made Sommer one of Wilmer’s rising stars.

“No one will know who you are when you come back,” recalls Sommer, a research faculty member at Wilmer and professor at Hopkins’ School of Medicine and the Bloomberg School.

When Sommer discovered in the late 1970s that vitamin A could prevent and cure eye disease in infants and dramatically reduce childhood deaths, eye care in the developing world was forever changed. His findings resulted in the largest medical mobilization since the polio vaccine, with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and other organizations now providing more than 400 million vitamin A supplements to children around the world each year.

The honors are well deserved. When Sommer discovered in the late 1970s that vitamin A could prevent and cure eye disease in infants and dramatically reduce childhood deaths, eye care in the developing world was forever changed. His findings resulted in the largest medical mobilization since the polio vaccine, with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and other organizations now providing more than 400 million vitamin A supplements to children around the world each year.

Under the guidance of Sommer, who directed the center in its first decade, researchers developed what are now the global policies for controlling vitamin A deficiency, trachoma, and river blindness—three of the four major blinding conditions in the developing world. The Baltimore Eye Survey, the first population-based survey and now a model for thousands of similar studies worldwide, also came from the Dana Center. The three-year study of 5,300-plus East Baltimore residents led researchers to determine that open angle glaucoma is a major cause of blindness, particularly in Africa.

“Wilmer has made a difference in the world because they were willing to invest in the Dana Center—a unique venture that has blossomed and not only made these great contributions but also created a field; [Wilmer] remains a leader of that field today,” Sommer states.

An international perspective is built into Wilmer’s DNA, he says, mentioning a number of Wilmer researchers currently working in global locales, from Central and South America to remote regions in Africa and Asia. Sommer credits the administration and a handful of doctors who realized early on the breadth of what Wilmer could contribute to—and learn from—other countries.

Sommer was inspired by David Paton, MD, a 1956 graduate of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine who later did his residency at Wilmer. “David was really the first person I know of who made an individual commitment to international ophthalmology,” Sommer recalls. “He wanted to see what ophthalmology was like in a part of the world where, at that time, many people didn’t go.”

During his time at St. John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem, Paton started one of the earliest eye banks in the Middle East in 1964. He returned to Wilmer to serve on the faculty but never forgot the lack of eye care and proper teaching he had witnessed abroad. “I thought, how in the world are we going to provide improved care that can be
Vision is so important, and many of these blinding conditions can be reversed or prevented. One person can make a huge difference.

—David Friedman

adapted to various countries?” he recalls.

In response, he created Project ORBIS, later changing its name to ORBIS International, a nonprofit agency for teaching modern eye surgery and eye care via its Flying Eye Hospital. “At the time, there were only one or two people who believed in my concept that one could teach modern ingenuities of eye care on an aircraft,” says Paton. After a donated formerly commercial DC-8 aircraft was refurbished with appropriate technology, the first ORBIS flight took off for Panama in 1982. Since then, ORBIS has carried out more than 1,000 training programs in 88 countries and treated more than 15 million people for blindness-related diseases and conditions.

ORBIS International recently hosted an event to honor the achievements of Paton, who volunteered as the organization’s medical director from 1968 to 1987. At the event, ORBIS leaders announced the establishment of a Paton Global Ophthalmology Fellowship, which will annually fund a senior fellow for one year’s service with ORBIS, after which the appointee will be qualified for a full-time academic position in an ophthalmology department seeking to expand its reach in global eye care.

“I’m thrilled about it,” says Paton. “This provides that academic bridge so ORBIS can be more closely related to academic leadership within the disciplines of ophthalmology.” Through his website, Paton plans to market his recently published memoir, Second Sight: Views from an Eye Doctor’s Odyssey, to help raise contributions to reach the $1.5 million goal for endowing the fellowship.

Even though Paton hasn’t worked at Wilmer since 1971, he remains connected. Two years ago, he initiated a discussion between Wilmer and the King Khaled Eye Specialist Hospital (KKESH), Saudi Arabia’s largest eye hospital where Paton had served as its first medical director. The result was a multi-year partnership in collaborative research, education, and patient care between the two institutions.

Both Paton and Sommer continue to inspire Wilmer’s established faculty and researchers, as well as beginning ophthalmologists. Fasika Woreta, now a cornea fellow and slated to be chief resident at Wilmer in 2013, was thrilled to meet Paton at the recent ORBIS International event. Her previous encounters with Sommer and other Wilmer colleagues involved in international research have fueled her passion for addressing preventable blindness around the world, particularly cataract and corneal disease in her native Ethiopia.

Woreta and third-year resident Peter Campbell joined Sommer and 19 other world leaders in ophthalmology this summer to analyze sustainable solutions for addressing the burden of unoperated cataract, which accounts for 50 percent of blindness worldwide. She and Campbell will attend the World Congress Ophthalmology meeting in Abu Dhabi next year to continue the discussion.

Both Woreta and Campbell have worked with Sheila West, PhD, El Maghraby Professor of Preventive Ophthalmology and vice chair for research at Wilmer. West is a leader in the global campaign to eradicate trachoma, a leading cause of blindness in the developing world. For the past 20 years, she has directed the Kongwa Trachoma Project in Tanzania, and carried out numerous, significant research projects that encompass diagnostics, immunology, genetics, epidemiology, and evaluation of control programs for trachoma.

She is currently the recipient of a significant grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for trachoma control research and is working with the Pan American Health Organization to eliminate trachoma in the Americas.

Although West has always been interested in global public health, it was Sommer who brought her to Wilmer in 1984. (She received her PhD in epidemiology from the Bloomberg School in 1980.) “He visited my home while I was working on hepatitis B in the Philippines and convinced me that international epidemiologists were needed to make an impact in ophthalmology,” she recalls. “His belief that research should make a difference, as well as advance science, is the siren call I try to follow.”

Many of West’s colleagues are following the same call all over the globe. Pradeep Ramulu, MD, PhD, is collaborating with investigators at the Aravind Eye Institute in India on
angle closure glaucoma, a blinding eye disease for which there is often a simple cure when detected at very early stages. Because Aravind has a huge clinical volume of angle closure glaucoma patients, several times that of the United States, Ramulu and his team have access to more clinical data, as well as advanced cases rarely seen at Wilmer. “Aravind benefits from Wilmer’s culture of research and study, and we benefit from the opportunity to learn from their clinical experience,” he says. “The world benefits from the results of the collaboration.”

David Friedman, MD, MPH, PhD, the inaugural Alfred Sommer Professor at Wilmer, currently leads two large telemedicine programs that have already screened several thousand diabetic patients for retinopathy in Indonesia and Bangladesh. With support from Helen Keller International, he has expanded cataract surgery training for doctors in rural China and conducted large population-based studies of eye disease in that region. Like Ramulu, he is researching angle closure glaucoma both in China and Singapore, where the disease is more prevalent than in the United States. The fundamental findings from his research are likely to apply in other settings, he says. “Vision is so important, and many of these blinding conditions can be reversed or prevented,” Friedman says. “One person can make a huge difference.”

And the time to make that difference is now, according to West. “The opportunity to contribute to the elimination of blinding eye disease is unparalleled at this time—countries, agencies, even the U.S. Agency for International Development, have joined in this effort,” she says. “Wilmer brings the necessary expertise in research to this alliance, and we should all feel proud of how Wilmer takes a broad perspective on eliminating blindness for citizens of all nations.”

William Holland Wilmer’s military service was extensive and impressive. Appointed “Surgeon in Charge of Medical Research Laboratories” for the American Expeditionary Forces in 1917, he served overseas in Liverpool, England, from August 6 to September 2, 1918, and then served until February 1919 at the 3rd Aviation Instruction Center in Issoudun, France. This was the largest airbase in the world, with 13 fields in operation and more than 10,000 soldiers were assigned there. Dr. Wilmer also served the nation’s military in World War II.

Nearly a century after the Wilmer Eye Institute’s namesake served in the nation’s military during World War I, Hopkins alumnus Bryan Propes, MD, honored Wilmer Institute’s staff by dedicating a series of flags and having them flown over the trauma hospital in Kandahar, Afghanistan, where Propes, LCDR, MC, USN, is currently serving.

“Kandahar is everything you’d expect, and nothing I can explain,” Propes writes from the field. “Every day you see young people—our fighting soldiers and sailors and Marines—as well as children, enemy combatants, and innocent civilians all mutilated in horrific ways. Not an individual with a wounded leg, or extremity, or an eye wound or abdominal wound, but someone with all of the above...And not just that person, but three or four just like them all arriving at the same time all needing multiple surgeries. As soon as those patients are dispositioned, three or four more are just as likely to come in. Sometimes before you get through the first batch, more will come in.”

Compounding the overwhelming patient load is the paucity of local physicians prepared to treat the wounded, Propes notes. “In the entire country there are only about 40 or so ophthalmologists practicing. There used to be more, but they all left, or were murdered by the Taliban,” he says.

Despite the grueling pace of his work, Propes says he’s grateful to be deployed in the field, rather than be in administrative role and getting “paper cuts.” “This is the opportunity of a lifetime to make a difference every day practicing ophthalmology,” he writes. “Indeed, this may be the most important thing I’ve ever done.”
With expertise in a broad range of specialties, Wilmer’s ocular oncology team is ideally equipped to meet the needs of patients across the cancer spectrum.

By Marlene England

The cashiers at the grocery store never have an answer for Peter McDonnell, MD, director of the Wilmer Eye Institute.

“Every time I’m in the checkout line, they ask me if I want to give to breast cancer, prostate cancer, colon cancer…” Although McDonnell considers all of these worthy causes, he usually receives a blank stare when he responds, “I’d like to give to eye cancer. How do I do that?”

“And no one can ever tell me how to make such a donation,” McDonnell says.

He isn’t surprised. Eye cancer—more specifically, cancer in and around the eye—doesn’t garner much public attention because it is so rare. This year, 2,570 new cases of cancers of the eye and orbit (the area surrounding the eye) will be diagnosed across the United States, and an estimated 240 people will die from the disease, according to the American Cancer Society.

Although these statistics may not be dramatic enough to inspire media coverage and nationwide fundraising campaigns, eye cancer takes a significant toll on individuals who have it. The disease can result in not only loss of vision but also complex reconstructive surgery and, though rare, removal of the eye. “The impact on quality of life as opposed to duration of life is an enormous factor for these patients,” McDonnell says. “Eye cancer may not necessarily be a life-ending event, but it is certainly life-changing.”

To treat eye cancer patients, most medical institutions have an ocular tumor physician on staff. But that’s not enough to meet the needs of those who turn to Wilmer for help, McDonnell says.
“The eye is a part of the body that can potentially be affected by every type of cancer,” McDonnell explains. “It takes a multidisciplinary team to attack the problem, a whole village of people from different specialties.” From the simplest to the most complex cases, Wilmer’s ocular oncology team is expertly equipped for effective diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up care.

In adults, most cancers of the eye and orbit are melanomas, with melanomas of the skin around the eye more common than those that develop inside the eye. Treatment can involve radiation therapy, laser therapy, or surgery. Lymphomas are the next most common cancer to affect the eye and orbit, often originating in other parts of the body. Chemotherapy and external radiation therapy are common treatment options.

One of Wilmer’s most challenging cases involves Joshua Lilliston, a teenager from Bel Air, Maryland, who was diagnosed with a tumor of the right orbit eight years ago. After numerous complicated surgeries and treatment regimens, he remains under the watchful care of several specialists, including Neil Miller, MD, a neuro-ophthalmologist at Wilmer who specializes in orbital surgery on patients who have brain tumors and orbital tumors that affect the vision.

“We’ve had a cast of thousands working on Joshua,” Miller says, citing a long list of departments involved, including pediatric neurosurgery, otolaryngology, oculoplastics, pediatric oncology, radiation therapy, pathology, and ophthalmology.

Joshua is now a student at Virginia Tech and in the civilian tract of the Corps of Cadets, majoring in mechanical engineering. He and his mother, Kathy Lilliston, a nurse practitioner, are grateful for the doctors’ collaboration. “They met as a team on all aspects of Joshua’s care, and everyone at Wilmer—from secretaries to surgeons—have made this a more manageable situation,” Kathy Lilliston says. She is particularly grateful to Dr. Miller for allowing Joshua to make decisions about his medical care and for being available to address their concerns, even during non-working hours. “I always consult with him on all matters because I know he will be honest in his opinions and only wants the best for Joshua,” she says.

Miller performed several surgeries on Joshua to remove the recurring tumor. Michael Grant, MD, one of only a few board-certified surgeons in the country trained in both ophthalmology and plastic surgery, performed two amniotic tissue grafts once it was determined that Joshua’s...
eye could not be saved. When the cancer returned earlier this year, the orbital implant (artificial eye) was removed. Grant filled the socket with tissue, and Richard Redett, MD, associate professor of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at Hopkins, grafted skin from Joshua's forearm to cover the eye socket.

Grant is one of four surgeons in Wilmer's Division of Oculoplastic Surgery. In addition to tumor removal and major reconstructive surgery, such as Joshua's, Grant and his colleagues also perform more delicate procedures that involve rebuilding portions of the eyelid.

It was Shannath Merbs, MD, PhD, who performed such a procedure on Eleanor Palmer. A resident of Washington, D.C., Palmer referred herself to Wilmer after being misdiagnosed at a Washington, D.C.–area ophthalmology office. Palmer's correct diagnosis was basal cell carcinoma of her lower eyelid. Merbs began with a simple excision of the cancerous cells, but when the cancer subsequently invaded under the scar tissue, it was necessary to remove most of Palmer's lower eyelid. Merbs reconstructed a new eyelid using skin and other parts from the upper lid, which required Palmer's eyelids to be sewn shut for six weeks while the new eyelid was healing. "It was a very delicate surgery, and this is where Dr. Merbs' talents really show," Palmer says.

Like many of the clinicians at Wilmer, Merbs also leads an active research program. Merbs and Jim Handa, MD, who specializes in the treatment of intraocular cancers, have been collecting uveal melanoma eye tumors, along with fluid from the eye and the patient's blood, in a Wilmer tissue bank since 2004. By studying the molecular genetic changes that lead to uveal melanoma, the most common malignant tumor that occurs in the eyes of adults, they hope to improve diagnosis and expedite new treatments. Their tumor bank, which was funded by the family of a patient who died from eye cancer, is a valuable resource also used by other Wilmer researchers.

For example, Charles Eberhart, MD, Wilmer's eye pathologist, was able to use samples from the tissue bank to confirm observations he had made in cell lines. In particular, Eberhart, together with Handa and Merbs, is looking at the role of the "Notch pathway" in uveal melanoma, and testing potential therapies that target the activation of the pathway.

Prem Subramanian, MD, an orbital surgeon who often collaborates with Merbs, Handa, and others, is confident that increased understanding of orbital tumors and other eye cancers will continue to result in improved treatments that preserve both function and appearance.

“Our ability to characterize the tumors in the lab has a tremendous influence in determining which tumor treatments are most appropriate for patients,” he says. “We have the ability to use many more chemotherapeutic agents today than we did in the past, and there is less of a role for radiation therapy alone in treatment of most orbital tumors.”

Radiation can damage the eye, Subramanian explains, because it’s impossible to shield the eye completely during treatment. "Chemo agents today are better tolerated and have fewer of the side effects people tend to associate with them. Chemo can shrink the tumor so a smaller area is radiated, giving us both better patient tolerance and outcomes."

Subramanian recently treated a patient with chronic lymphocytic leukemia, which had been in remission for two years. She returned to Wilmer with proptosis (bulging) of both eyes and was found to have new cancerous masses. “I performed a biopsy and, with the aid of my pathology, oncology, and radiation therapy colleagues, was able to protect her vision and get her started on effective treatment,” he says. “My goal is to preserve sight and function whenever possible, and we are able to do this more and more frequently.”

Jim Handa, MD, specializes in the treatment of intraocular tumors. He’s collaborating with Shannath Merbs, MD, PhD, to create a bank of cancerous eye tissue to study the molecular genetic changes that lead to uveal melanoma.
Generosity in the Face of Loss

George Perry, PhD, had many concerns as he prepared to undergo cardiac surgery at a hospital in Washington, D.C. Losing his vision wasn’t one of them. But a day or two after his operation, it became obvious to Perry, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, that something was terribly wrong with his eyesight. He had lost most of his vision in both eyes, with no peripheral (side) vision at all.

Doctors determined that Perry had an extremely rare condition called Non-Arteritic Anterior Ischemic Optic Neuropathy (NAAION), often referred to as a stroke of the optic nerve. (Composed of millions of fibers, the optic nerve carries visual information from the retina to the brain.) Without warning, NAAION can occur when there is a lack of blood supply and sufficient oxygen during surgery, which changes the blood’s ability to coagulate. The unexpected and sudden loss of vision—and lack of treatment or cure—make NAAION a particularly devastating disease for patients.

For Perry, it has changed everything. “My eyesight is extremely limited. I can’t drive and reading is very slow,” he says. “It’s hard to see in the shade, so the world gets very dark for me.” To date, there is no hope for restored vision.

At a friend’s suggestion, Perry requested a second opinion from Neil Miller, a neuro-ophthalmologist at Wilmer. “He was described to me as a world leader in research on eyesight problems, including mine,” Perry recalls. “My experience with Dr. Miller has been that not only is he deeply involved in important research but that he is also an extremely thoughtful and caring physician.”

Nearly three years have passed while my problem doesn’t have a cure on the immediate horizon, there are other conditions closer to being improvable and perhaps some day research will be specifically helpful to my problem as well.

–George Perry, who with wife Dina made a significant gift to support the research of Neil Miller
since Perry’s first appointment with Miller. At the time, Perry was struggling not only with the loss of his peripheral vision but also with significant double vision. Orthoptists at Wilmer were able to put special prism lenses in Perry’s glasses to help correct the misalignment between the visual fields in his right and left eyes, eventually eliminating the double vision. But nothing could be done to restore his lost vision.

“NAAION is hard on anyone but certainly the more highly functioning the patient, the harder it is,” says Miller. Although the condition is rare (less than one-tenth of 1 percent of Wilmer’s patients have NAAION), Miller has noticed a slight uptick in cases, which he believes is a result of increased cardiac procedures.

When not caring for patients, he is in his research lab, trying to find a way to prevent, repair, and restore optic nerve damage from NAAION and other conditions—or at least prevent further damage. “Optic nerve disease is a major cause of untreatable blindness around the world—and it’s one of the holy grails of ophthalmology,” he explains. “We do pretty well with certain conditions—cataracts, corneal disease, macular degeneration—but optic nerve disease is a true failure because we cannot yet regenerate or repair the optic nerve in human beings.”

After learning about Miller’s research, Perry and his wife, Dina, made a significant contribution, and they recently increased their giving. “Dina and I know firsthand how difficult it is to cope with the loss of eyesight,” Perry responds. “We know what a difference it would make if medicine were more helpful—and we’re happy to support Dr. Miller’s research for that reason. While my problem doesn’t have a cure on the immediate horizon, there are other conditions closer to being improvable and perhaps some day research will be specifically helpful to my problem as well. We hope that our gift helps Dr. Miller and his colleagues to work more intensely on possible cures and preventions.”

To move his research forward at a faster pace, Miller needs significant financial support for his seven-person lab. Donations such as those provided by the Perrys have helped him obtain a major grant from the National Eye Institute. Because this type of research is extremely time-consuming and costly, gifts from the Perrys and other generous donors expedite the pace of research, which means a solution may be found sooner.

Already Miller’s team has succeeded in developing the only model of NAAION in primates, whose optic nerves most closely resemble those of humans. With support from the Perrys, the team is now testing several drugs that may reduce optic nerve damage from NAAION, such as that which caused Perry’s loss of vision. In addition, Miller and his colleagues have now been approached by a group in New York that wishes to collaborate by using stem cells to restore vision in animals—and then in humans—with NAAION.

“The Perrys’ support has made a monumental difference in our ability to move ahead,” Miller states. “As a physician, you want to help people one at a time, but in addition you’d like to help a large group of people. What the Perrys have done is very altruistic. They’re essentially saying, ‘We know you can’t help us, so at least help others.’”

—ME

Optic nerve disease is a major cause of untreatable blindness around the world—and it’s one of the holy grails of ophthalmology.

—Neil Miller, MD ’71
Maryland native, born at home in Pikesville and raised in Aberdeen, Patricia (“Patti”) Guerrieri was proud to be associated with Wilmer Eye Institute and was fascinated by the brilliance and tenacity of its researchers. She was instrumental in creating the Guerrieri Family Foundation, which not only supported Hopkins and Wilmer but hospitals and schools on Maryland’s Eastern Shore.

As a member of the Wilmer Advisory Council, Guerrieri supported research at Wilmer and was proud of its advances and innovations. She would be the first to applaud anyone being honored. She also would be the first to leave before any technical presentations were made. Squeamish about hospitals and medical details, she did not want to see any graphic slides. Nonetheless, she developed great fondness for the doctors she met at Wilmer and was always impressed with their talent and dedication.

To honor her unflagging support, the 22nd Annual Wilmer Research Meeting, held last April 15, was dedicated to Guerrieri’s memory (see p. 14).

Guerrieri, who passed away in 2010, was the devoted wife of Alan, to whom she was married for 58 years, and the beloved mother of five and grandmother of nine. Her vivacious presence—her humor, her generosity, her love of life—are missed greatly by all who knew her. She took a personal interest in everyone she met and had a great attention to detail, noticing things that other people missed.

She loved learning and was a natural researcher, always reading articles or looking up facts about something that had captured her interest. Her interests ranged widely—from the smallest spider to the largest mountain, from ancient civilizations to current events. A huge football fan, a great cook and gardener, she was also a collector of shells and lover of antiques.

Guerrieri attended Mary Washington University at the age of 16 but graduated from Maryland State Teachers’ College, the predecessor of Salisbury University, where she was a renowned athlete and where she met her future husband. During most of her married life, she lived in Salisbury and Ocean City, Maryland. She always considered the Eastern Shore home, even after moving to Florida in the 1990s.
The 22nd Annual Wilmer Research Meeting
April 15, 2011

Researchers, special guests, family and friends gathered at the 2011 Wilmer Research Meeting, dedicated to the memory of Patricia R. “Patti” Guerrieri.

The WRM is a day to celebrate the work of Wilmer researchers through posters and presentations.

Pictured l to r: Donald Zack, MD, PhD, Guerrieri Professor of Genetic Engineering & Molecular Ophthalmology; members of the Guerrieri family; (far right) Morton Goldberg, MD, Joseph E. Green Professor in Macular Degeneration and Other Retinal Diseases.

Wilmer Congratulates Alfred Sommer 2011 Ophthalmology Hall of Fame Inductee
May 10, 2011

The American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons (ASCRS) named Alfred Sommer, MD, MPH, of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, as its 2011 inductee into the Ophthalmology Hall of Fame. Dr. Sommer is dean emeritus of the Bloomberg School, professor of ophthalmology, and University Distinguished Service Professor. Previous Hall of Fame inductees from Wilmer include A. Edward Maumenee, MD; J. Donald M. Gass, MD; Frank B. Walsh, MD; Arnall Patz, MD; and Jonas S. Friedenwald, MD.

Pictured l to r: Peter J. McDonnell, MD, William Holland Wilmer Professor of Ophthalmology and Wilmer Director; Alfred Sommer, MD, MPH; and Roger F. Steinert, MD, Irving H. Leopold Professor and chair of Ophthalmology, director, Gavin Herbert Eye Institute, professor of biomedical engineering, University of California, Irvine.

Wilmer Legacy Society Spring Luncheon
May 17, 2011

Legacy Society members and special guests gathered on May 17 in our nation’s capital to hear Dr. Allison McCoy speak about her experience as a resident in Wilmer’s general eye service and around the world. Nationally known Washington D.C. attorney Edward Beckwith presented on estate planning.

The Wilmer Legacy Society was created to recognize the legacy of donors for their commitment to the future of the Wilmer Eye Institute.
Our Work to Cure Blindness: Our Donors

The scientists and staff of the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins gratefully acknowledge our partners in philanthropy listed here. The generosity of these friends supports a tradition of collaboration and far-reaching investigation as, together, we pursue the complex challenges of eye diseases. While our space here is limited, our thankfulness is not. Although gifts of any amount are gratefully received, only gifts, pledges, and pledge payments totaling more than $250 in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011, could be listed in this report. If any donor was accidentally missed, or if you prefer to remain anonymous, please contact the Development Office at 410-955-2020.

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Drs. Robert A. and Gail M. Liss
Mr. George S. Livanos
Faculty Feats
A sampling of FY11 honors for Wilmer physicians

Esen Karamursel Akpek, MD
- Appointed associate professor of rheumatology, Department of Medicine, Hopkins School of Medicine
- Appointed national chair of the Study Committee and principal investigator on “Topical Cyclosporin Therapy in Atopic Keratoconjunctivitis,” supported by Allergan, Inc. (total direct cost $619,000)
- Appointed editorial board member, Middle East African Journal of Ophthalmology
- Appointed member of ARVO’s Continuing Medical Education Committee
- Appointed departmental representative of Medical School Council, Hopkins School of Medicine
- Selected member of the International Workshop on Meibomian Gland Dysfunction
- Selected to be included in Best Doctors in America by Consumers’ Research Council of America

Ava K. Bittner, OD, PhD
- Completed a PhD in clinical investigation from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
- Received the 2010–2011 American Academy of Optometry Ezell Fellowship Award
- Inducted as a member of the Phi Beta Kappa national academic honor society
- Selected to participate as a fellow in the 11th Annual NIH / OBSSR Summer Institute on the Design and Conduct of Randomized Clinical Trials Involving Behavioral Interventions

Neil Bressler, MD
- Chaired the NIH-sponsored Diabetic Retinopathy Clinical Research Network, a collaboration of more than 1,000 investigators and other personnel, whose work was used as justification for funding of the National Eye Institute, and mentioned as one of three accomplishments in a press release by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation announcing congressional passage of a $300 million renewal of funds for diabetes research over the next two years
- Invited by the National Eye Institute to present Diabetic Retinopathy Clinical Research Network accomplishments to the National Advisory Eye Council, whose members advise the National Eye Institute
- Received a Senior Scientific Investigator Award from Research to Prevent Blindness
- Elected as secretary of the Macula Society

Susan Bressler, MD
- Continues to serve the Diabetic Retinopathy Clinical Research Network as a vice chair and as the manuscript development leader. In the past two years the DRCR.net has published 11 scientific papers in leading peer-reviewed literature reporting critical findings from prospective clinical trials dedicated to improving care for individuals with diabetic eye disease. As a member of several protocol development committees she has also assisted in preparing three trials that have recently launched to further our knowledge in this area of diabetic macular edema and proliferative diabetic retinopathy.
- Continues to co-manage an exciting study within AREDS2 evaluating a home monitoring device for individuals with age-related macular degeneration who are at high risk of progressing to vision-impaired forms of the disease. The goal is to determine if this device identifies earlier onset of wet macular degeneration, which should provide for better vision results with prompt initiation of therapy.
- Continues to be recognized for her outstanding teaching with invitations to speak internationally and nationally on AMD and diabetic eye disease, including the keynote lecture for WinR (Women in Retina) at the annual meeting of the American Society of Retina Specialists
Gislin Dagnelie, PhD

- Received a five-year R01 from the National Eye Institute for “Development of a Prosthetic Low Vision Rehabilitation Curriculum”
- Received a Stimulus Grant subcontract (with second Sight Medical Products) to “Develop and Test Low Vision Assessment Tools for Visual Prostheses”
- Published the book *Visual Prosthetics: Physiology, Bioengineering, Rehabilitation*, the first in this new field to cover the biological and functional aspects of visual prostheses

Diana V. Do, MD

- Gave birth to first child, Alexandra-VanHa
- Program chair, 2011 Maryland Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons 5th Annual Ophthalmology Convention
- Guest of honor and the International Society for Prevention of Blindness Lecturer, 2011 Illinois Association of Ophthalmology and Chicago Ophthalmological Society Annual Joint Conference
- Guest of honor and invited speaker, XIX Reunião de Oftalmologia, Lisbon, Portugal
- Invited faculty at the 2011 Macula of Paris, France; the 2011 Angiogenesis, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute; the 5th French-American Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology Symposium, Montreal, Canada; the 2011 Oxford University Eye Congress, United Kingdom

David S. Friedman, MD, MPH, PhD

- Received a five-year Translational Research Center grant by the Centers for Disease Control to assess public health interventions to improve vision among Americans
- Implemented diabetic retinopathy telemedicine screening programs in Indonesia and Bangladesh
- Lectured as a keynote speaker at the annual European Glaucoma Society in Madrid (Epidemiology of glaucoma in Europe; Impact on the approaches to glaucoma treatment) and the Brazilian medical school annual meeting (Sao Paolo)
- Presented at the Moorfields (London) annual meeting and invited to speak at Grand Rounds
- Lectured at Wills Eye Hospital Annual Meeting as the Richard Ellis honorary speaker
- Chaired sessions at Asia ARVO (Singapore) and the World Glaucoma Congress (Paris)
- Completed enrollment of nearly 900 subjects in the largest single center clinical trial (to prevent angle closure glaucoma) in ophthalmology

Morton F. Goldberg, MD

- Presented the inaugural Dr. G. Venkataswamy Endowment Lecture, Madurai, India, 2010
- Presented the Four Father Endowed Lecture, “A Reappraisal of North Carolina Macular Dystrophy,” University of Illinois at Chicago, 2010
- Dedication of the Morton F. Goldberg Professorship in Ophthalmology at the University of Illinois in Chicago, 2011

Michael P. Grant MD, PhD, FACS

- Visiting professor, Peking University Department of Maxillofacial Surgery, Beijing, China; & Department of Ophthalmology, Shanghai 9th People’s Hospital
- International coordinator, Oculoplastics Section, APAO/AAO Joint Meeting, Sydney, Australia
- Elected, AAO Council Nominating Committee
- Course chairman, Principles of Orbital Reconstruction, AO North America, Chicago

David L. Guyton, MD

- Professorship named in his honor: The David L. Guyton, MD, and Feduniak Family Professorship in Ophthalmology
- Received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus
- Delivered the Owen Belmont Memorial Lectures on Optics and Refraction, Wills Eye Hospital

more >
James T. Handa, MD

- Attended Beckman conference on age-related macular degeneration
- Awarded one-year $100,000 Beckman Institute grant for AMD
- Selected to be a reviewer for Thome Awards in AMD (He is a current recipient of this grant.)
- Continues to be a member of the editorial board of *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science*
- Invited Speaker to ISER, July 2010, Montreal
- Faculty advisor for Heed Foundation Meeting for Residents, Chicago, October 2010
- Invited speaker, Wills Eye Institute 50th anniversary meeting, Philadelphia, January 30, 2011
- David Rich Lecture, University of Alabama, Birmingham, March 23, 2011

Henry D. Jampel, MD, MHS

- Keynote speaker, Wilmer Day of Learning, June 2011
- Assumed chairmanship of American Academy of Ophthalmology's Ophthalmic Technology Assessment Committee
- Appointed chair of Information Technology Subcommittee of the Johns Hopkins Clinical Practice Association's Practice Management Committee

Albert Jun, MD, PhD

- Appointed vice chair of education for the Wilmer Institute
- Keynote speaker, Asia Cornea Society Meeting, Kyoto, Japan
- International keynote speaker, Homburg Keratoconus Symposium, Homburg, Germany
- Visiting scholar, Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Invited speaker and moderator, Asia ARVO Annual Meeting, Singapore
- Invited speaker, Corneal Dystrophy Foundation Biennial Meeting, Portland, OR
- Invited speaker, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan

Richard J. Kolker, MD

- Invited speaker for JHCAPO 2011 Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida

Shannath Merbs, MD

- Awarded access to the Center for Inherited Disease Research (CIDR) to perform DNA methylation analysis of 500 samples from patients with macular degeneration and glaucoma to look for novel epigenetic changes associated with these diseases
- Member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology's Practicing Ophthalmologists Curriculum Oculoplastics/Orbit Panel, 2009–2014, Office Record Review (ORR) module revision
- Co-chair, Translational Research in Orbits and Oculoplastics session, Asian Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology–American Academy of Ophthalmology Joint Congress 2010, Beijing, China
- Invited speaker at the 17th Annual Glaucoma Foundation Optic Nerve Rescue and Restoration Think Tank, “Epigenetics and Glaucoma,” New York City, October 2010

Peter J. McDonnell, MD

- International Guest of Honor, Brazilian Congress of Ophthalmology
- Chabad-Lubavitch International Johns Hopkins Medicine International Community Service Award, October 2010
- International President, American-Brazilian Ophthalmological Association, 2010
Neil R. Miller, MD

- Delivered the plenary lecture at the Singapore National Eye Centre, Sentosa Island, Singapore, and the Holden Cook Lecture at the Yale University School of Medicine

Elliott H. Myrowitz, OD, MPH

- Named Maryland Optometric Association Optometrist of the Year
- Invited visiting professor and session chair, Saudi Ophthalmology 2011 Symposium
- Course director Wilmer/ MOA, 4th Annual Evidence-Based Care in Optometry meeting

Quan Dong Nguyen, MD, MSc

- Proud father of newborn daughter, Alexandra-VanHa
- Chair of the scientific program committee, 2011 Congress of the International Ocular Inflammation Society, Goa, India
- Visiting professor at University of Toronto, Canada; University of Nebraska
- Guest of honor and invited speaker, XIX Reunião de Oftalmologia, Lisbon, Portugal
- Invited faculty at the 2011 Macula of Paris, France; the 2011 Angiogenesis, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute; the 2011 Oxford University Eye Congress, United Kingdom
- Course director, the 5th French-American Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology Symposium, Montreal, Canada
- Chair of the Multi-Center READ-3 Study (Ranibizumab for Edema of the Macula in Diabetes) sponsored by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

Josephine O. Owodeye, OD, MPH

- Selected as an advisory board member for the Salus University Master of Public Health program
- Received University of California, Berkeley Translational Research conference travel grant for junior researchers

Harry Quigley, MD

- Director, Glaucoma Center of Excellence
- Awarded the prestigious Leslie Dana Medal by the St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Authored Glaucoma: What Every Patient Should Know, a guide to glaucoma written for patients

Pradeep Ramulu, MD, PhD

- Received Special Scholar Award from Research to Prevent Blindness
- Instituted new resident didactic format for glaucoma—sessions were classified as “very useful” by 89% of residents, as compared to 37% for traditional lectures
- Visiting professor, Flaum Eye Institute, Rochester, NY

Michael X. Repka, MD, MBA

- Earned MBA in Medical Services Management, conferred Johns Hopkins University December 30, 2010
- Edward J. Stegman CPA Memorial Award
- American Academy of Ophthalmology, Secretariat Award, Communications Department, 2010
- American Academy of Ophthalmology, Life Achievement Honor Award, 2011
- President, Maryland Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

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Hendrik Scholl, MD, MA
- Obtained $1,250,000 from the Clark Charitable Foundation, Inc., to perform research in ocular albinism
- Invited speaker at the U.S. Congress Briefing on September 23, 2010, hosted by the Alliance for Eye and Vision Research’s (AEVR) Decade of Vision 2010-2020 Initiative, co-hosted by the AMD Alliance International (AMDAI), the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO), and the European Vision Institute
- Invited speaker at the World Health Organization Consultation on public health approaches to the management of age-related macular degeneration, Rome (November 2011)

Richard D. Semba, MD, MPH
- Moderated a session on malnutrition at the II World Congress of Public Health Nutrition in Porto, Portugal
- Discovered a link between the “anti-aging” hormone klotho and lifespan among older adults living in Tuscany, Italy
- Awarded an internal grant and received a private donation to complete the catalog of the William Holland Wilmer Rare Book Collection

Akrit Sodhi, MD, PhD
- Awarded K08 grant from NEI to study angiogenic dysregulation in VHL retinal hemangioblastomas.
- Awarded Research to Prevent Blindness Career Development Award to study the role of novel hypoxia inducible genes which promote edema in retinal and choroidal neovascular disease

Walter J. Stark, MD
- Guest of honor of the 1st International Congress of Ophthalmology, Grosseto, Rome

Prem S. Subramanian, MD, PhD
- Keynote speaker, Sankara Nethralaya Eye Foundation, Chennai, India
- Appointed to editorial board, Journal of Neuro-Ophthalmology
- Visiting professor, Flaum Eye Institute, Rochester, NY

Jennifer E. Thorne, MD, PhD
- AAO’s Best Paper Award, 2010
- Visiting professor at the University of Iowa, Dept. of Ophthalmology
- Guest lecturer, Canadian Uveitis Society, Canadian Ophthalmologic Society Annual Meeting
- America’s Top Ophthalmologist, 2011

Mark O.M. Tso, MD, DSc
- Continues to be the director for education of International Council of Ophthalmology (with close to 100 memberships across five continents)
- Appointed coordinating chair of the World Ophthalmic Education Colloquium (7 Symposia) at the World Ophthalmic Congress 2012 Abu Dhabi
- Awarded 2010 Gold Fellowship of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology
- Appointed honorary director and professor of the Peking University Eye Center, Beijing, China
- Elected president, Shandong Red Cross Prevention of Blindness Foundation—Shandong, China

David S. Zee, MD
- Received the Master Clinician Award from the Johns Hopkins senior neurology residents
- Received an Outstanding Teaching Award from the Osler medicine house staff
- Delivered the Morris Bender Lecture, Mt. Sinai Medical School in New York
- Gave keynote lectures at the Biannual National Congress of Neurology, Borovets, Bulgaria, and the National Congress of Neurology in Punta del Este, Uruguay
- Invited to teaching courses in Siena, Italy; Toronto, Canada; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Chennai, India; and Reykjavik, Iceland
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<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>One-life rate</th>
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<td>70</td>
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