

Inside Retina

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News from the California Retina Research Foundation

CALIFORNIA RETINA SPECIALISTS RESTORE SIGHT IN VIETNAM

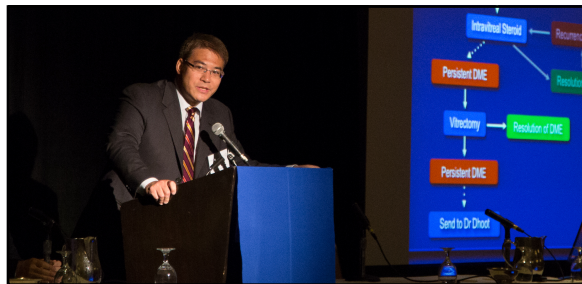
The medical team of Dr. Dante Pieramici and Melvin Rabena, Director of Research for the California Retina Research Foundation (CRRF), traveled thousands of miles from their Central Coast practice to Ho Chi Minh City this past August, as part of an expedition sponsored by Santa Barbara-based SEE International (Surgical Eye Expeditions International) and the CRRF, the research/education division of California Retina Consultants. Their goal was to restore sight, educate local doctors, and help establish a sustainable diabetic retinopathy clinic. Most of the patients examined suffered from severe diabetic retinopathy, a complication of diabetes that leads to damage of the tiny blood vessels in the retina. **Continued on page 4.**



Dr. Pieramici with ophthalmologists at Trung Vuong Emergency Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

CRRF 12th ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL MEETING RECAP

California Retina Research Foundation’s 12th Annual Educational Meeting, “The Latest in the Management of Retinal Diseases,” welcomed its largest audience to date, hosting hundreds of California ophthalmologists, optometrists and eye care specialists. The educational meeting was held on October 5th at Santa Barbara’s Fess Parker Double Tree Resort where this year’s keynote speaker was Dr. Peter Kaiser, vitreoretinal surgeon at Cleveland Clinic’s Cole Eye Institute. Dr. Kaiser lectured on several topics, including the diagnosis and treatment of vitreoretinal interface diseases and the role of steroids, laser, and anti-VEGF injections in the treatment of diabetic macular edema. He also spoke about complement system and inflammatory pathways involved in the development of dry macular degeneration.



Dr. Kaiser from the Cleveland Clinic’s Cole Eye Institute was the keynote speaker at the CRRF’s 12th Annual Educational Meeting.

California Retina Research Foundation faculty speakers presented complementary topics including advances in the management of dry age related macular degeneration, new techniques in vitreoretinal surgery, outcomes of pivotal clinical trials on diabetic macular edema and improvements in retinal imaging techniques. The meeting also included case presentations, panel discussions and Q&A. California Retina Research Foundation is proud to host this educational event for eye care professionals from the central coast and central valley communities.

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CLINICAL RESEARCH UPDATE

DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

In the United States, diabetic macular edema (DME) is the leading cause of vision loss in people under 55 years of age. DME is a result of damage to the blood vessels in the macula caused by diabetes. The macula is the central area of the retina and is responsible for detailed vision. Edema, or swelling, accumulates in this part of the retina and can lead to vision loss. In the advanced form of diabetic eye disease, new blood vessels and scar tissue can form on the retina. This is known as proliferative diabetic retinopathy (PDR) and it can cause bleeding in the retina and vitreous. PDR can also lead to loss of vision and even blindness.

For the past ten years, California Retina Consultants has been a member of Diabetic Retinopathy Clinical Research Network (DRCR). DRCR is comprised of over 320 physicians and 100 top clinical centers across the United States. Funded by the National Institutes of Health and National Eye Institute, DRCR has organized large clinical trials investigating new treatments for diabetic related eye diseases. CRC physicians are currently participating in DRCR clinical trials for DME and PDR. In Protocol S, investigators are comparing intravitreal anti-vegf injections to panretinal photocoagulation laser treatment in eyes with PDR. In Protocol T, investigators will compare the efficacy and safety of three drugs for DME: ranibizumab, bevacizumab and aflibercept. Both trials are ongoing and primary results are expected by the end of 2014.

Later this year, enrollment for Protocol V, another trial for patients with DME, will begin at CRC. This study will determine which treatment approach will provide the best visual outcome. When patients present with poor vision, research shows that anti-VEGF injections provide the best outcome in many cases. However, when patients present with good vision, despite having macular edema, we do not know which treatment option is best. This study will determine and guide best treatment options for these patients. There are a variety of treatment possibilities that will be tested, including laser, anti-VEGF injections and a combination of these therapies.

WET MACULAR DEGENERATION

CRC physicians will initiate two new clinical trials for wet macular degeneration (wet AMD). Wet AMD is characterized by the growth of abnormal blood vessels (called neovascularization). A complex system of growth factors involved in neovascularization is the target for a number of new compounds designed to treat wet AMD. One such compound is Fovista™ by Ophthotech Corp., an aptamer designed to bind to platelet-derived growth factor beta. In October 2013, California Retina Consultants was selected as a site for a new clinical trial studying the investigational medication Fovista™ which is injected into the eye in combination with ranibizumab (Lucentis®) in patients with new onset of wet AMD. The study is designed to determine the efficacy and safety of Fovista™. Approximately 600 patients will participate in this trial.

Santen Pharmaceuticals is investigating the role of a potent inhibitor of vascular endothelial growth factor and platelet derived growth factor, tyrosine kinase receptors. The investigational medication known as DE-120 is injected into the eye in patients with wet macular degeneration. In this Phase 1 trial, patients with advanced wet AMD will be eligible to participate. The study is expected to open for enrollment later this year.

IMPAIRED DARK ADAPTATION

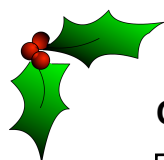
Impaired dark adaptation is the inability for the eye to adjust to changing levels of darkness and light. This can make everyday activities like driving and walking challenging. This deficiency can be caused by a number of conditions including macular degeneration and other retinal diseases. However, new research suggests that an imbalance in levels of photosensitive molecules, known as opsin and rhodopsin, may affect the ability of the retina to adapt to changing levels of light. QLT Inc. is investigating a new drug to help improve low light vision in patients. California Retina Consultants is one of six centers in the world participating in this clinical trial. The study will enroll approximately 40 patients.

To find out more about CRRF's ongoing clinical trials, please contact Melvin Rabena, director of research at 805-963-1648.

EYE SIGHTINGS

- ❖ Dr. Avery was the guest speaker at the University of Vienna's annual retina meeting in Salzburg, Austria. He also presented at: Club Vit, Bermuda; Aegean Retina, Santorini, Greece; and American Society of Retina Specialists, Toronto, ON. In addition Dr. Avery presented at the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the pre-AAO Retina Subspecialty Day meetings in New Orleans and will co-moderate a meeting of experts in New York City working on creating a standard of care for intravitreal injections, later this year.
- ❖ Dr. Castellarin attended the Aspen Retinal Detachment Society meeting, presented at the Associazione Oculisti Veronesi (Verona Ophthalmological Society) in Verona, Italy; was selected as one of America's Top Ophthalmologists in 2013 and served as a member of an expert advisory panel on the treatment of retinal vein occlusions.
- ❖ Dr. Couvillion presented on diabetic retinopathy in Portland, Houston, Tucson, Palmdale and Phoenix. He also gave a presentation on surgical techniques at the American Academy of Ophthalmology in New Orleans and was a guest lecturer for the Tri-County Optometry Society meeting in Buellton.
- ❖ Dr. Dhoot presented clinical research findings at the American Society of Retina Specialist's annual meeting in Toronto, ON in August; and American Academy of Ophthalmology meeting in New Orleans. Dr. Dhoot was nominated to the Board of Directors for Advanced Center for Eyecare, a nonprofit clinic in Bakersfield, as well as to the Board of Directors for the Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired, also in Bakersfield.
- ❖ Dr. Nasir was a guest lecturer at The Brazilian Congress of Ophthalmology March 2013 in Sao Paulo, Brazil. He also presented research findings at the American Society of Retinal Specialist's annual meeting in Toronto, ON in August.
- ❖ Dr. Pieramici presented at Club Vit, Bermuda; Association for Research Vision and Ophthalmology meeting in Seattle and Wills Eye Hospital meeting in Los Angeles. Dr. Pieramici gave multiple lectures and instructional courses at the American Academy of Ophthalmology meeting in New Orleans, and served as guest speaker at the Cottage Hospital Diabetes Update Conference in Santa Barbara.
- ❖ Dr. Steinle presented scientific papers at the 2013 Cleveland Clinic Retina Conference and was a guest lecturer for the Tri-County Optometry Society meeting in Avila Beach. Dr. Steinle is also a guest speaker on surgical techniques at the upcoming Vit-Buckle Society meeting in Las Vegas.
- ❖ California Retina Consultants was named "Site of the Year" in February 2013 by the Diabetic Retinopathy Clinical Research Network for overall site performance.

OUR MISSION IS YOUR VISION



YES, I AM INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING CRRF RESEARCH PROJECTS, CLINICAL TRIALS, AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, WITH A DONATION OF:

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CALIFORNIA RETINA SPECIALISTS RESTORE SIGHT IN VIETNAM

Continued from page 1.

This disease is treatable in developed countries through a 10-minute laser procedure, an option not available to most in Vietnam.

“We are in the early stages of developing ‘gold standard diabetic retinopathy clinics,’” explained SEE International retina program coordinator Rachel Siegel. Gold standard clinics would be sustainable and aided by SEE expeditions, eventually leading to the creation of a telemedicine program in which the clinic has a digital fundus camera enabling them to send images to a reading center in the U.S. Siegel further explains, “This initiative would be a great teaching tool for host doctors to become more familiar with diagnosing diabetic retinopathy. The program is multi-faceted, allowing for treatment, patient and doctor education, and follow up care.” Targeted clinic sites include Vietnam, Peru, Honduras and Tajkistan.



Dr. Pieramici and Dr. Ngoc Diem review retinal images of a patient with proliferative diabetic retinopathy.

“Nobody should go blind from diabetic retinopathy if they control their diabetes and receive appropriate eye care,” stressed Dr. Pieramici, who specializes in this and other retina-related diseases, and has completed other expeditions like this across the globe. He says he is motivated to help these individuals prevent a lifetime of blindness, however, the main goal of these retina programs is to teach and equip the local doctors.

Dr. Ho, a general ophthalmologist in Ho Chi Minh City, was grateful to have the opportunity to observe Pieramici and Rabena during their three days at Trung Vuong Emergency Hospital. Through patient examinations and lectures, the American team shared valuable training with Dr. Ho and his colleagues. California Retina Consultants share SEE international’s long-term goal of raising funds to establish ongoing telemedicine programs to continue aiding doctors here and in other undeveloped countries. Pieramici said he’s also interested in bringing qualified doctors to his Santa Barbara office for further in-depth training.

For more information or to make a donation to help fund future medical missions, visit www.seeintl.org and www.californiaretna.com.

CRC OFFERS EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

This past summer California Retina Research Foundation offered paid summer internships to two UCSB students, reinforcing the Foundation’s commitment to education and the community.

“I can’t think of a better way to spend my summer,” said Lauren Moissiy who graduated from UCSB in May with a BS in biology, and joined the Foundation and California Retina Consultants for the summer, along with UCSB junior, Austin Fullenkamp. The 11-week internship program enabled both Moissiy and Fullenkamp to assist with clinical research projects and observe surgical procedures.

Fullenkamp echoed Moissiy’s enthusiasm. A junior at UCSB, Fullenkamp says he had a lot of fun during his internship, while learning a great deal. “I had no idea how complex the process and procedures were; as a patient, you never get to see that perspective.” Fullenkamp hopes to attend medical school after graduation.

California Retina Consultants are also training Dr. Carlos Quezada, a retina specialist from Mexico City, who joined the practice in November and will stay in Santa Barbara for six months, traveling to various offices, while observing and working with doctors. Dr. Quezada will assist with clinical research related to macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy and surgical techniques.

After earning his medical degree from the University of Coahuila in México, Dr. Quezada completed his residency in ophthalmology at the Instituto de Oftalmología Conde de Valenciana in Mexico City where he also completed a vitreoretinal surgery fellowship. Dr. Quezada was chosen as the 2013 Gillingham Pan-American Fellow and received a grant by the Pan-American Association of Ophthalmology and the Retina Research Foundation of Houston, Texas. He later pursued postgraduate work as an Ocular Pathology-Research Fellow at McGill University where he was awarded The Leonard Ellen Ocular Pathology Fellowship Award.



CRC welcomes Dr. Carlos Quezada and his wife Cecilia to Santa Barbara.

PATIENT PERSPECTIVES

Patient: Richard Wade

Diagnosis: Vision loss due to proliferative diabetic retinopathy

Clinical Trial: Diabetic retinopathy clinical trial participant, who received ranibizumab injections monthly for one year.

How did you get involved with the clinical study?

I had been going to a doctor and received cataract surgery, but after the surgery I still had a problem with my vision, so my doctor recommended I see one of the retina specialists at the California Retina Consultants in Bakersfield. They were very good to me.

What motivated you to participate?

Well, I had a black spot on my vision and I really wanted to get that spot out of my view. I was used to seeing clearly and I missed that. I was willing to try anything to improve my vision.

Did your vision change as a result of participating in the study?

Yes it did. I got rid of that black spot and was able to get my license renewed!

What are you most worried about in relation to your diabetes?

I am doing very well and I only want my vision to continue to get better. There is some haze now and then, but I can still read and drive. My vision is better and it's actually getting better instead of going down.

How do you feel now?

I feel great. I am retired, but I used to detail cars, which I can still do if people come around now and again. And I'm a musician and a pastor. I play the piano and organ at my church.

Would you recommend this study to others?

I certainly would. There were no disadvantages to the trial and my vision improved with the study. It was worth it.

To find out if you qualify, or to receive more information on California Retina Research Foundation's ongoing clinical trials, please contact Research Director, Melvin Rabena at 805-963-1648.

California Retina Research Foundation

NEW PALMDALE OFFICE OPENS

California Retina Consultants continues to grow in Southern California with the opening of a new, expanded office to better service Palmdale and Lancaster patients. Construction was completed in October and the new building provides more ample parking, two new elevators, and decreased wait time for patients. Dr. Robert See states, “There are two additional exam and treatment rooms which will enable us to more efficiently see and treat patients.” The facility is located on the new Palmdale Regional Medical Center campus where the surgery center is only a few steps away. California Retina Consultants is thrilled to see such growth in the Antelope Valley where the Palmdale office provides quality care in an efficient setting. New patients may call (661) 948-0102 to schedule an appointment. The office is located at 38660 Medical Center Drive, #A350, Palmdale, California.



California Retina Consultants opens newly expanded office to better serve patients in the Antelope Valley.

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