Founded in 1911, the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center recently celebrated its centennial. This year, we also celebrate our tenth anniversary since the UT Hamilton Eye Institute officially opened in 2004.
It continues to be an especially exciting time in health care and ophthalmology both here at the Hamilton Eye Institute and across the globe. In this issue of Hamilton Eyelights, we present news that encompasses the spectrum of our ongoing mission in education, clinical care, and vision research, as well as local, national and international outreach. We recently welcomed two nationally and internationally acclaimed guests to the Hamilton Eye Institute for the Sir Harold Ridley and William N. Williford, MD, distinguished professorship lectures. Additionally, many members of our academic and research faculty have been extremely active. Several exciting new research grants have been initiated this fall, and our faculty continues to publish prolifically and advance both the art and science of vision health.

In international news, the Hamilton Eye Institute changed the lives of hundreds of children and their families in Latin America this summer through outreach programs in Panama and Honduras. Meanwhile, the local community rallied again this year for the Memphis VisionWalk to raise funds for the Foundation Fighting Blindness.

It has been an outstanding year, and we expect even greater strides in 2015.

For more than a century, the University of Tennessee Health Science Center Department of Ophthalmology has served as a source of superb clinical care and academic excellence, where extraordinary training is provided through outstanding residency and fellowship training programs, and where landmark discoveries are made through clinical and basic research.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Hamilton Eye Institute. Its opening in 2004 fulfilled the lifelong vision of Memphis ophthalmologist Ralph S. Hamilton, MD, whose skill, dedication, high ethical standards and faith have inspired us all. Over the past decade, HEI has exceeded all expectations. By bringing together the finest ophthalmic physicians, scientists, educators and resources under one roof, the Hamilton Eye Institute has become a powerhouse for innovation and discovery and is poised to be a leader in ophthalmology for the next century.

Memphis is one of the most generous cities in the nation,* and we thank those among our community, department alumni, dear friends, grateful patients, foundations, organizations and visionaries who support our important work.

In addition to our major donors (see page 16), we are also grateful to those who give what they can, for even the smallest donations can add up to provide a huge network of support through which so much can be achieved.

My deepest gratitude to each and every one of our donors for making possible all that we accomplish in our mission to eliminate blindness.

On October 23, the HEI hosted the 13th Sir Harold Ridley Distinguished Visiting Professorship for Creativity and Innovation in Medicine and Ophthalmology. Created by Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology Jerre M. Freeman, MD, this endowed lectureship celebrates the careers of people who have led the way in changing the face of American medicine.

Presented by famed cataract surgeon Robert H. Osher, MD, professor of Ophthalmology at the Cincinnati Eye Institute, this year’s Ridley Lecture imparted an inspiring message. “Truth isn’t what the majority agrees is true,” Dr. Osher said. “Truth is truth.” Innovation and scientific progress, he said, come from realizing those truths and championing them against all opposition.

This philosophy exemplifies the ideals set forth by Sir Harold Ridley, who pioneered cataract extraction surgery with intraocular lens implantation. Though he faced strong and prolonged opposition from the medical community, he persevered. Today, cataract surgery is the safest, most effective, and most frequently performed eye surgery in the world.
The 17th Annual William Williford, MD Distinguished Visiting Professorship

The Hamilton Eye Institute (HEI) was proud to welcome back Peter A. Netland, MD, PhD, as the 17th Williford Distinguished Visiting Professor on November 6. Dr. Netland is a former HEI faculty member, having joined the department in 1997. In 2004, he accepted the chair of the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, where he also holds the Vernah Scott Moyston Professorship in Ophthalmology.

Dr. Netland’s lecture, “Blood Vessels, Epithelium, and Glaucoma,” was well attended by HEI faculty, residents and alumni as well as several physicians from throughout the region. A lively discussion and award presentation followed.

This annual event is named for William N. Williford, MD, a highly regarded anterior segment and cataract surgeon and an alumnus of the UTHSC Department of Ophthalmology. He established this distinguished visiting professorship in 1997.
In August, HEI faculty returned to the Republic of Panama for Niños Sanos, Niños Felices, a program of the Fundación Pro-Integración led by Virginia Alvarado, executive directors Soraya Bhiku and J. Thomas Ford, and board trustees. The program brings hundreds of children from underserved areas of Panama to El Vigia Hospital in the village of Chitré for free corrective surgeries for crossed eyes (strabismus) and drooping eyelids (ptosis).

UTHSC Ophthalmology Chair James C. Fleming, MD, FACS, and HEI Director Barrett G. Haik, MD, FACS, participated in this year’s event.

Other surgeons volunteering from the United States included treasured longtime colleagues George S. Ellis, Jr., MD, director of Ophthalmology at the Children’s Hospital of New Orleans, La., and Kenneth W. Wright, MD, founder of the Wright Center for Pediatric Ophthalmology & Adult Strabismus in Los Angeles, Calif.

Esteemed Panama ophthalmologists Jorge Arrue, MD, Felix Ruiz, MD, and Ernesto A. Calvo, MD, were among many who provided excellent leadership and interchange of knowledge and skill. Surgeons, anesthesiologists, scrub techs, nurses and many others also participated.

We are grateful to AmeriCares, Alcon, Beaver-Visitec International, Robert B. Carter at FedEx, and Ethicon Endo-surgery (facilitated by Brian T. Fowler, MD), who generously donated supplies and services for this outreach mission.

“The mission was a great success and a true friendly partnership between the United States and Panama,” said Dr. Wright of the experience.

“It was a wonderful trip,” said Dr. Fleming. “We are truly gratified to have had a hand in bringing so much joy to these children and their families.”

**FANTASTIC FOLLOW-UPS**

A patient pictured here both before (left) and after (right) surgical correction of her misaligned left eye shows the transformative effect this program has on children, both physically and psychologically. This is just one example of the hundreds of children whose lives have been forever changed by this remarkable program.
A. Drs. Fleming (left) and Haik (right) take a patient’s medical history as they prepare for a day of surgeries.

B. Families await surgery in the pre-op room.

C. (From left) Drs. Haik and Ellis, J. Reeves Ellis, a volunteer nurse, and Dr. Fleming in the operating room.

D. Drs. Haik (left) and Fleming perform eye alignment surgery.

E. (From left) volunteers Susie Adzhyan and Kara LaMattina, Dr. Wright, Dr. Calvo, Dr. Haik, Tom Ford, J. Reeves Ellis, and Dr. Ellis.
This fall, through the combined efforts of many outstanding medical professionals from HEI and Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital, 80 children in Guatemala received corrective surgery for crossed eyes (strabismus) and drooping eyelids (ptosis). Representing HEI were faculty members Natalie C. Kerr, MD, FACS, Brian C. Fowler, MD, Lauren C. Ditta, MD, and Ralph F. Hamilton, MD; orthoptist Chantel Devould, CO; and alumnus Emily Taylor Graves, MD.

We are grateful to the Shalom Foundation and the team at the Moore Pediatric Surgery Center in Guatemala City, led by Drs. Ligia Figueroa, Pedro Merida and Ana Muralles; the Hamilton family, who donated the facility fee; Alcon, Ethicon, MAP International, Beaver-Visitec International and AmeriCares, who donated medical supplies; and Drs. Ditta and Fowler, who facilitated those donations; and to all other sponsors, donors and volunteers.

**Outstanding Outcomes**

Crossed eyes and droopy eyelids can harm children’s self-image and make them targets for bullies. Most of the children helped by this program are under the age of 10, and are still able to recover their self-esteem. Here we see little Felix, both before (left) and after (right) the life-changing surgery that aligned his right eye. The effect is quite dramatic.
HEI Residency Director Appointed to National Residency Review Committee

Natalie C. Kerr, MD, FACS, Hiatt Professor of Ophthalmology and director of HEI’s Residency Program, has been appointed by the American Medical Association as their ophthalmology representative to the Residency Review Committee of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, the national accrediting body for residency training programs. Her appointment begins in January 2015.

High Participation in Annual Ophthalmology Meetings

In October, HEI faculty and residents traveled to Chicago to participate in the annual meetings of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) and the American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (ASOPRS). More than 25,000 physicians attend these meetings each year to present research, transfer skills and share knowledge.

Numerous HEI faculty members participated this year. Department Chair James C. Fleming, MD, FACS, spoke at a symposium on ocular trauma at the ASOPRS meeting. At the AAO meeting, HEI faculty members Natalie Kerr, MD, FACS, and Matthew W. Wilson, MD, FACS, served on selection subcommittees, and each also presented a lecture. Dr. Kerr and Alessando Iannaccone, MD, MS, also presented scientific posters at the meeting, and Jorge I. Calzada, MD, presented an original paper.

Dr. Natalie Kerr, UTHSC student Tara Tae, and HEI orthoptist Chantel Devould present their AAO poster.

Dr. Rebecca Epstein, second-year HEI ophthalmology resident, presents a poster at AAO.
Jim and Virginia McGehee Skills Transfer Center Gains New Diagnostic Simulator

This fall, a direct ophthalmoscope simulator joined the suite of virtual reality training platforms at HEI’s Jim and Virginia McGehee Skills Transfer Center. Another was installed in HEI’s interactive classroom.

This installation was inspired by the innovative mind of Jim McGehee, a major community leader and friend with a deep understanding of the value of simulator use in aerospace training.

The simulator accurately recreates the feel of a real ophthalmoscopic examination. When observed through the handheld optic, the simulator’s gray plastic face appears as a lifelike virtual patient of varying age and gender who even blinks and flinches at the bright light. By presenting a wide spectrum of clinical cases with an increasing level of challenge, it helps teach the essential skills of recognition, diagnosis and management of retinal diseases.

“The simulator allows the instructor to monitor students’ ability to visualize normal and abnormal findings in the retina,” said Associate Professor of Ophthalmology and Assistant Professor of Pathology William R. Morris, MD, who directs HEI’s medical student education. “Also, other students in the group can see what they should be observing when they perform their ophthalmoscopic examination.” This represents a major advantage over traditional ophthalmoscopy training.
HEI Evaluates New Cataract Surgery Technology

In September, HEI faculty and residents got a special hands-on preview of the CataRhex3, a Swiss phaco machine for cataract surgery, a month ahead of the official product launch at the American Academy of Ophthalmology meeting in Chicago. This unique wetlab featured presentations by Oertli Instruments Switzerland and its United States distributor, Katalyst Surgical.

“The Skills Transfer Center offers state-of-the-art training for the next generation of eye surgeons,” said Aaron Waite, MD, director of Cornea, Cataract and Refractive Surgery at HEI. “The surgeons in training truly benefit from synergy with technology developers such as Oertli. This event allowed them the opportunity to use the newest technology in a lab setting with direct access to the training team.”

Second-year resident Hank Wynn, MD, said, “It was a privilege to be among the first physicians in the country to work with the Oertli phaco machine and a fantastic opportunity to experience the latest technologies available to an anterior segment surgeon.”
Memphis VisionWalk Supports Fight Against Blindness

On October 26 at Shelby Farms, the Mid-South Chapter of the Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB) raised more than $50,000 in the fight against blinding retinal degenerative diseases at the Memphis VisionWalk, the highest amount ever raised by this annual event. It was also the highest level of participation in Memphis VisionWalk’s history, with 35 teams and 525 walkers.

The iWalk4iSight team included several HEI faculty and staff members, and was led by team captain and FFB chapter president, Dr. Alessandro Iannaccone. This annual 5K was one of 61 Vision-Walks held nationwide this year. Since its inception in 2006, VisionWalk has raised more than $30 million to fund sight-saving research.

HEI Participates in Ocular Health Screening

UTHSC Ophthalmology Department Chair James C. Fleming, MD, FACS, oculoplastic surgery instructor Brian T. Fowler, MD, and several HEI residents participated in an ocular health screening on November 1 for the Men’s Health Summit at Brown Missionary Baptist Church in Southaven, Miss.

More than 110 adults were screened for refractive error, cataracts and glaucoma. Of these, more than 20 were found to have signs of pathology and were referred for further workup.

Dr. Fleming and resident Hank Wynn, MD, examine a patient as other patients are examined in the background.
In October, Steve Charles, MD, FACS, clinical professor of Ophthalmology at HEI and founding director of the Charles Retina Institute, spoke to more than 500 school children in the Memphis Youth Crime Watch (MYCW) about the importance of crime prevention and the empowerment of our community’s youth.

He has partnered with the Community Outreach Program (COP), a proactive initiative developed by the Memphis Police Department to reduce juvenile violence and improve quality of life for citizens. The COP accomplishes this through collaborations with Memphis businesses, churches, schools and residents.

The MYCW program is designed to empower school children to help take responsibility for the safety of their schools by promoting a safe learning environment. The program is run by the students and supported by teachers and COP volunteers.

HEI Faculty Members Publish Ophthalmic Disorder Book

HEI faculty members William R. Morris, MD, and Thomas O’Donnell, MD, have teamed up with Robert Enzenauer, MD, professor of Ophthalmology at the Children’s Hospital in Aurora, Colo., and medical writer Jill S. Montrey, MD, to coauthor Functional Ophthalmic Disorders: Ocular Malingering and Visual Hysteria.

This manual for the practicing ophthalmologist focuses on diagnostic testing for functional visual disorders. It includes color photos and links to online videos that assist in differential diagnosis. The textbook’s official release date was November 14.
The Hamilton Eye Institute is pleased to announce the relocation of our Germantown Center to a beautiful new location at 8001 Centerview Parkway, Suite 101, just across the street from the Agricenter International.

Tom Lee Park & Beale Street Landing

Memphis has a new port of call at Tom Lee Park. Beale Street Landing is located where Beale Street meets the Mississippi River in Downtown Memphis. A docking area for the American Queen steamboat, Beale Street Landing has gardens, seating areas, free wifi, a grass roof with open areas for picnicking, and free family movie nights on the hill during the warmer months. For the kids, there’s a splash playground with a giant catfish, a slide, and water shooting from the tops of giant pipes painted like reeds. For adults, Tom Lee Park is a great place for a morning run or bicycle ride. There’s also the Riverfront Bar & Grill, with a Southern-style menu, full bar, indoor and outdoor seating, and a stunning view of the river.
Macular Degeneration Treatment Study Funded

The Owens Medical Foundation has awarded a grant to Monica M. Jablonski, PhD, professor of Ophthalmology, and Anatomy and Neurobiology, to study a therapy and delivery system for treating age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

For more than 15 years, Dr. Jablonski’s laboratory has gathered convincing evidence that a glycan receptor in the retina may be activated to indirectly support photoreceptors affected by AMD. Her team will carry out a proof-of-principal study in a rat model to test therapies that support the survival of the retina. They also aim to learn more about how glycans support the retina and how Müller cells interface with photoreceptors to promote their survival.

Dr. Iannaccone Invited to Discuss Retinal Degeneration Phase 1B Clinical Trial Results in Recent Issue of Lancet

Alessandro Iannaccone, MD, MS, director of HEI’s Retinal Degeneration and Ophthalmic Genetics Service and associate professor of Ophthalmology at HEI, was recently invited by Lancet to comment on a Phase 1B clinical trial that offers a new approach to treating a specific form of Leber congenital amaurosis characterized by enzymatic defects that cause severe, early onset visual loss and involuntary eye movement.

Dr. Iannaccone thinks the pharmacological approach for bypassing these enzymatic defects looks promising, but he also sounded a note of caution, detailing evidence for potential confounding variables. “The last thing anyone wants to do is to claim huge therapeutic successes when the perceived benefits may have been due, at least in part, to a poorly controlled confounding variable as essential as the time spent adjusting to the light of the testing instrument before running the test,” he said.
SUPPORTERS OF THE HAMILTON EYE INSTITUTE

Although the spotlight for our achievements is often placed on our physicians, scientists and leaders, it is the support of philanthropists and dear friends that truly makes possible all that we accomplish. The generosity of these individuals, organizations and foundations is a vital component of all that we do, providing critical funds for vision research, medical education, clinical care, and community and worldwide outreach efforts.

We offer our most heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of these remarkable supporters, whose vision and generosity have played a critical role in the success of the Hamilton Eye Institute at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center.

If you are interested in becoming a supporter, please contact Zach Pretzer, director of Development for the UTHSC College of Medicine, at (901) 448-4975 or zpretzer@uthsc.edu. Mailing address: 62 S. Dunlap St., Office 513, Memphis, Tennessee 38163.

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