

InsideRetina Directory

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For more information, visit us online at www.californiaretina.com and www.californiaretinaresearch.org.

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EYE SIGHTINGS 2023

Throughout the past year, our esteemed doctors have had the honor of being invited as keynote speakers at various conferences both nationwide and worldwide. These opportunities not only highlight their expertise but also spotlight our commitment to advancing medical knowledge and patient care on a global scale. Here are some of the prestigious conferences where our doctors were keynote speakers in 2023:



DR. DANTE PIERAMICI had the opportunity to speak at the following meetings in 2023: Bascom Palmer Eye Institute 2023 Angiogenesis Meeting, discussing Phase 3 Results of Pavilion Trial of the PDS in patients with Diabetic Retinopathy; Pacific Retina Club San Francisco, moderating a panel discussion on Managing AMD and Other CNV Conditions; Retina Festival Wilmer Eye Institute Johns Hopkins

Hospital, presenting on Refillable Drug Delivery Devices in the Treatment of Retinal Diseases; Retina Society, focusing on Post Operative Monitoring and Long-Term Follow-up of a PDS Treated Patient; Innovate Summit Stanford University, addressing Real World Geographic Atrophy Therapy; American Academy of Ophthalmology Pre-academy Retina Meeting, moderating a panel on Late Breakers in Retina; and Clinical Trials at the Summit 2023, discussing OPT-302 Combination Therapy for Neovascular AMD.

DR. ALESSANDRO CASTELLARIN attended the OSN Retina meeting and the ARDS meeting, lectured in Italy twice in 2023, was invited as a guest lecturer at the University of Verona, and had an article published in the local newspaper.



DR. DILSHER DHOOT was invited to York, United Kingdom to present “Update on Gene Therapy.”

He delivered innovative lectures in EURETINA, Amsterdam, and the Netherlands. Dr. Dhoot attended ASRS, Seattle, WA and presented “Suprachoroidal Delivery of Investigational ABBV-RGX-314 for Diabetic Retinopathy: The Phase II Altitude Study.” He gave a talk on the “Efficacy of Intravitreal Pegcetacoplan in Geographic Atrophy: 24-Month Results from the Randomized Phase 3 OAKS and DERBY Trials” at the Clinical Trial Summit, Park City, UT, and lectured at the Macula Society Annual Meeting, Miami, FL on “Improved Retina Fluid Control with Faricimab in Phase 3 Trials in DME and nAMD.”

ROBERT AVERY, MD has been actively engaged in sharing expertise and insights at prestigious events throughout 2023. Here’s a glimpse of Dr. Avery’s presentations: AAO Subspecialty Day: San Francisco, Eyeceleator at AAO: San Francisco, ACRS Macula: Boston, Advanced Retinal Therapy: Vienna, ARVO: New Orleans, ASRS: Seattle, Clinical Trials at the Summit: Park City, Hawaii Eye: Kauai, Macula Society: Miami, Octane Innovation Forum: Newport Beach, Retina Society: New York City, and Vit Buckle Society: Las Vegas ■

CALIFORNIA RETINA RESEARCH FOUNDATION

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RETINAL INSIGHTS, CONTINUED

or other immunosuppressive agents. Luckily, we’re finding that by using lower doses of the gene therapy and prophylactic anti-inflammatory therapy, the chance of having a severe vision inflammatory response is much reduced.

DR. YANG: Patients should discuss with their eye care providers if they are interested in participating in trials. Please refer to the Foundation for Fighting Blindness and ClinicalTrials.gov for more information.

DR. PIERAMICI: I’m enthusiastic about the potential for gene therapy in its many forms. Being able to prevent blindness and potentially reverse severe vision loss in some patients is very, very compelling. In the future there will be better ways of delivering the genetic material to the cells, so patients will be less likely to have inflammatory responses and more effective and directed targeting.

DR. YANG: Researchers are exploring gene therapies that target the expression of neuroprotective factors and anti-inflammatory proteins. These targets will benefit a large population with common diseases such as glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration. Less invasive delivery methods and improved vector designs will lower the procedure related risks. ■

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InsideRetina

SUMMER 2024

OUR SAN LUIS OBISPO OFFICE EXPANDS TO A NEW, STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY!



MEET OUR NEWEST PHYSICIAN: WELCOMING A VALUED ADDITION TO OUR PRACTICE!

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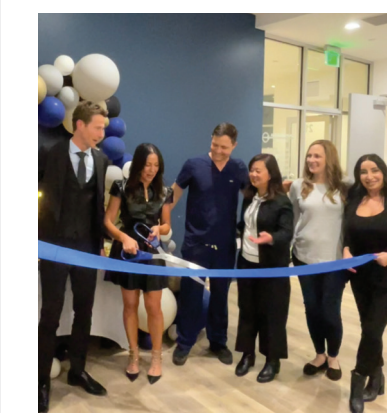
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WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE that San Luis Obispo moved to a brand-new 3,180 sq. ft. space equipped with cutting-edge technology. This expansion represents our commitment to providing the highest quality of care and service to our patients. Our new location boasts four spacious work-up rooms, four examination rooms, modern waiting areas, and enhanced amenities to ensure your comfort and convenience during your visits.

WHY THE MOVE?

As our practice continues to grow, we recognize the need for more space and resources to accommodate our expanding patient base and offer an even higher standard of care. The new facility allows us to meet these demands while maintaining the personalized attention and compassionate care that define our practice.



LOOKING AHEAD: BECOMING A CLINICAL TRIAL SITE

In addition to our enhanced facilities, we’re excited to share that CRC San Luis Obispo will eventually serve as a clinical trial site. This development opens up opportunities for patients to access innovative treatments and contributes to the advancement of medical research. ■

WELCOMING A VALUED ADDITION TO OUR PRACTICE!

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St. Luke's Hospital in Denver, Colorado, she completed ophthalmology residency at Jules Stein Eye Institute at the University of California Los Angeles. She trained in vitreoretinal surgery at Harvard's Massachusetts Eye & Ear Infirmary. After fellowship training, she stayed in Boston as an attending at Harvard Vanguard/Atrius health and was a clinical instructor at MEEI. She previously held a full-time academic position at the University of Washington where she was active in clinical trials and the training of residents and fellows. Dr. Yang is thrilled to relocate to California and provide exceptional patient care out of our Oxnard, Palmdale, Simi Valley, Valencia, and Westlake Village locations.

Dr. Yang embodies our commitment to excellence in vitreoretinal surgery. Her expertise and dedication will undoubtedly enhance our practice's commitment to excellence in patient care and groundbreaking research. Her involvement in clinical trials not only enhances her own knowledge but also ensures our patients have access to the latest advancements in retina care. For those who haven't had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Yang yet, we're thrilled to introduce this talented doctor to our team! Please join us in giving Dr. Yang a warm welcome! ■

RETINAL INSIGHTS

GET READY TO DIVE into the fascinating world of gene therapy for inherited retinal diseases (IRDs)! We're thrilled to bring you an exclusive interview featuring some of our very own CRC doctors who are leading experts in this groundbreaking field. Our doctors will graciously share their expertise through a series of captivating interview questions. At CRC we believe in empowering our patients with knowledge and hope!

1. Please provide an overview of gene therapy and its role in treating inherited retinal diseases.

DR. PIERAMICI: Broadly Speaking, gene therapy is using genetic material to treat diseases; most commonly this is accomplished by adding genes that are normal or editing genes that are abnormal. These therapies are used for inherited retinal diseases (IRDs), such as retinitis pigmentosa and potentially for complex diseases, such as age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy.

DR. YANG: Inherited retinal degenerations (IRDs) encompass a wide range of diseases that can lead to progressive loss of retinal function and visual loss. Over the past decades, advances in our understanding of the genetic and cellular mechanisms underlying retinal disease, gene delivery vectors, and gene editing systems have translated into clinical treatment options. Clinical trials have demonstrated the ability to slow photoreceptor degeneration or restore vision.

2. What are some of the most common IRDs and how do they impact patients' vision and quality of life?

DR. PIERAMICI: Retinitis pigmentosa is an IRD that can be caused by hundreds of different genetic defects that manifest in a similar phenotype or clinical appearance and disease course. Most commonly RP presents with loss of night and peripheral vision generally progressing over many years to involve the central vision in more late stages. Stargardt's Disease is another inherited retinal degeneration that's relatively common, and tends to involve the central vision more than the peripheral vision.

DR. YANG: A common IRD is retinitis pigmentosa, where there is commonly a mutation in the rhodopsin gene that leads to progressive dysfunction of the light sensing cells in the retina. Patients usually present with difficulty seeing at night. Stargardt's disease is a form of inherited juvenile macular degeneration and causes central vision loss. Other common IRDs include cone-rod dystrophy, choroideremia, X-linked retinoschisis, achromatopsia, and Leber congenital amaurosis.

3. What are the key factors that determine whether a patient with an IRD is a suitable candidate for gene therapy treatment?

DR. PIERAMICI: Gene therapy for IRDs tends to be very specific. First, you identify the genetic abnormality and then you can genetically engineer ways of correcting the abnormality by adding normal genes to the cells or correcting the abnormal genetics using gene editing techniques such as CRISPR techniques. Gene therapy as a drug delivery system can be designed to add genetic material, not normally found in the cell, that is coded to produce a therapeutic protein. This approach may allow a "one and done treatment" for chronic complex diseases that tend to require lifelong drug therapy.

DR. YANG: Monogenic diseases, in which one gene is mutated, are easier to target than complex diseases with many genes involved, as is the case with age-related macular degeneration. In 2017 the FDA approved treatment for RPE65 mutation-associated retinal dystrophy. Many other gene therapy treatments are currently being studied in clinical trials.

4. Can gene therapy be combined with other treatment options, such as medication or surgery?

DR. PIERAMICI: Gene therapy generally requires a way of transporting the genes or editing material into the target cells. Most commonly this is accomplished using viral vectors such as adenoviral vectors that are loaded with the genetic payload. In the eye, these engineered vectors are delivered by ocular injection or placed under the retina via a surgical approach.

DR. YANG: Gene therapy can be combined with other treatment modalities. Implantation of an electronic retinal prosthesis or other devices that aid in visual performance can provide the ability to help patients with basic orientation tasks. Researchers are exploring transplantation of human embryonic or induced pluripotent stem cell-derived RPE and photoreceptors.

5. What ongoing follow-up appointments or monitoring are required after receiving gene therapy treatment?

DR. PIERAMICI: Depending on the condition, it could potentially be a one time therapy instead of having regular intraocular injections. However, complications can occur such as intraocular inflammation, and the efficacy will need to be monitored as supplemental therapy may be required in some cases.

DR. YANG: Patients are usually followed closely pre- and post-gene therapy treatment. The vector and route of administration impacts the post procedure care and risk of inflammation. Subretinal gene therapy requires a surgery to deliver and has higher risks compared to suprachoroidal or intravitreal injections, which are done in the office.

6. Are there any specific genetic tests or evaluations that patients should undergo before considering gene therapy?

DR. PIERAMICI: For IRDs one must determine the specific genetic defect, if a targeted approach is to be conducted. For more complex retinal diseases for which a drug delivery approach is considered, such as adding a gene to produce anti-VEGF protein, one will want to be certain first that the patient will respond to this type of therapy.

DR. YANG: Patients should undergo detailed baseline exams including vision, perimetry, dark adaptation, electrophysiological tests, OCT, wide field photos, and detailed biomicroscopy. A detailed medical history and family history is noted. Genetic testing is then performed to identify the mutation(s). Genetic counseling is recommended to understand the results and to help guide the next steps in the treatment plan.

7. What risks or potential side effects associated with gene therapy should potential patients be aware of?

DR. PIERAMICI: With gene therapy we use a viral vector to introduce the genetic material into the cells and sometimes people can have an inflammatory response to the viral vector. In some cases, it could result in a severe inflammatory response that will need to be treated with steroids



Clinical research team

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE REVIEW 2023

ON NOVEMBER 10, 2023, the California Retina Consultants Clinical Research Department celebrated our first Annual "Operational Excellence Review" meeting held in Bakersfield. All four locations came together and celebrated the 2023 year of excellence. In clinical research we strive to provide excellence in 5 key areas: Patients First, Embracing Talents, Living Excellence, Trust Matters, and Safety & Compliance.

Operational excellence is our approach to business management and patient satisfaction that emphasizes continuous improvement across all aspects of CRCs Clinical Research Department.

During our OER meeting, each department administrative lead presented an overview for the 2023 year including target goals for the 2024 year, along with new future implementations and protocols.

Director of Research, Soila Carlos awarded Natasha Edwards, Lead Recruitment, and Edwin Andrade, Clinical Research Coordinator, with our 2023 "Star Awards". The star award is voted on by the staff themselves and is recognition of the recipients' superior work performance, work ethic, and continuous strive to achieve Operational Excellence.

Three Pinnacle Awards were awarded to Luis Lopez, Rina Odina, and Ani Ramirez. The Pinnacle awards were chosen by the management team and were carefully and thoughtfully reviewed. The Pinnacle awards were based on these three criteria's: Mentorship, Performance, and Quality.

Medical Director, Dante Pieramici, gave the team an aspiring speech on why research is so important and the power it has to change the future of Retina care.

The administrative team was excited to have the entire team in one room and celebrate each site's accomplishments throughout the 2023 year.



Guest speaker and a few of the CRC physicians following the 22nd Annual Meeting. From left : Dr Pieramici, Dr. Avery, Dr. Steinle, Dr. Jumper, Dr. Castellarin, and Dr. Dhoot

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR 22ND ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL MEETING

WE ARE EXCITED TO SHARE WITH YOU the highlights from our 22nd Annual Educational Meeting, which took place on September 23, 2023, at the Hilton Beachfront Resort in Santa Barbara. This event brought together over 120 eyecare professionals from across the region, making it a tremendous success.

We were honored to welcome esteemed guest speakers, Michael Jumper, MD, a renowned retina surgeon from West Coast Retina in San Francisco, and Andrew Clark, MD, who will be joining our practice in September 2024. Their expertise and insights enriched our discussions and provided valuable perspectives on advancements in retina care.

During the meeting, our team of physicians at California Retina Consultants led engaging discussions and shared insightful case studies, showcasing our commitment to excellence in patient care.

Additionally, exhibitor booths from industry leaders such as Allergan, Alcon, Coherus, Alimera Sciences, Apellis, Genentech, Iveric Bio, Heidelberg Engineering, Regeneron, and RegenXbio provided us with invaluable information on cutting-edge diagnostic for retinal diseases.

From the discussions and insights gathered at this annual meeting, it is evident that the field of retina care is rapidly evolving, with innovative technologies and treatments continually emerging. The California Retina Research Foundation remains dedicated to educating the eyecare community on the latest developments and research in this field, all aimed at enhancing the care and well-being of local patients affected by severe retinal conditions. ■



Guest Speaker Dr. Andrew Clark presents at the 22nd Annual Educational Meeting.

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