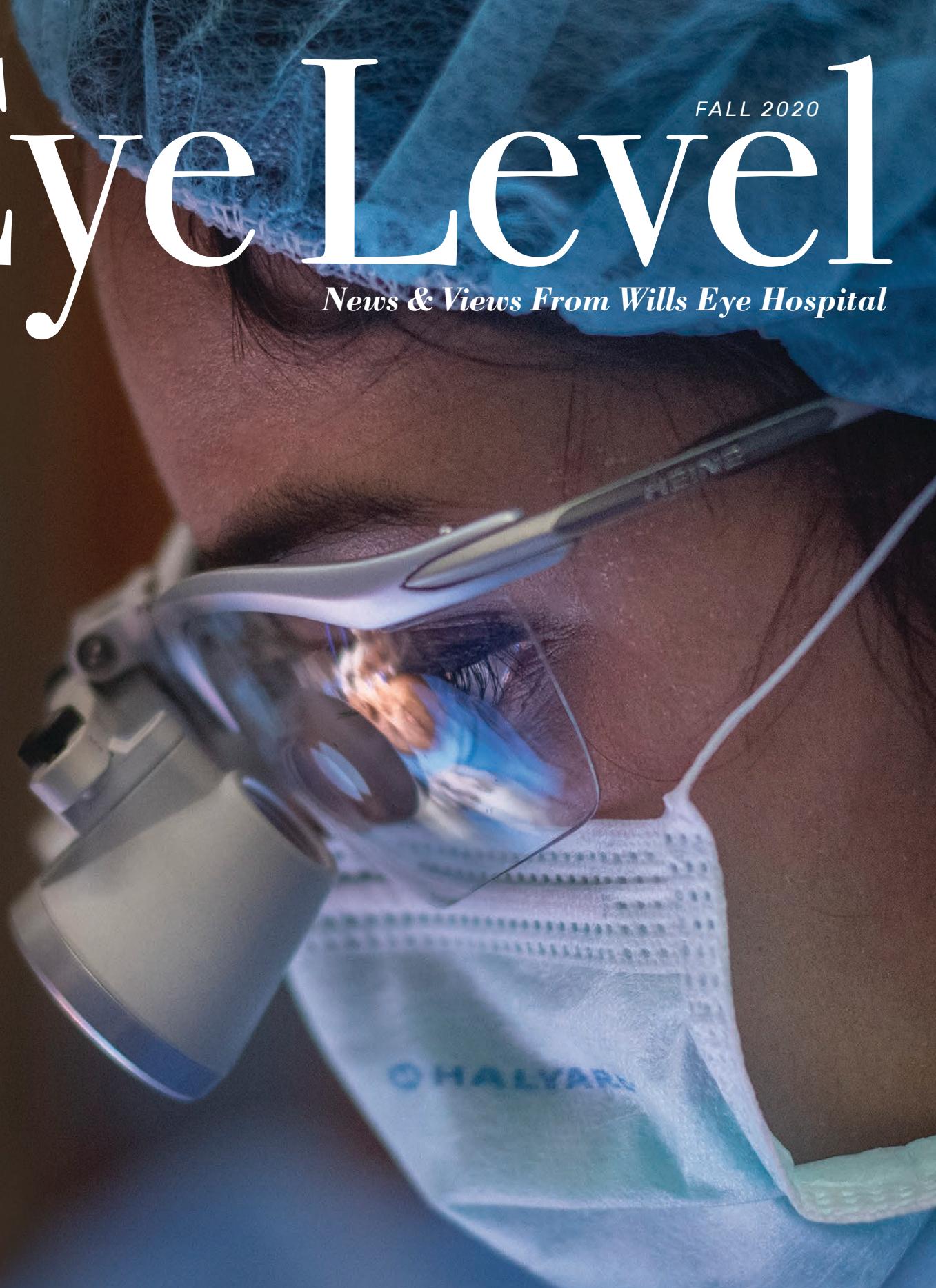


EyeLevel

FALL 2020

News & Views From Wills Eye Hospital



CARING FOR PATIENTS IN THE AGE OF COVID

How Wills Eye Is
Meeting the Challenge

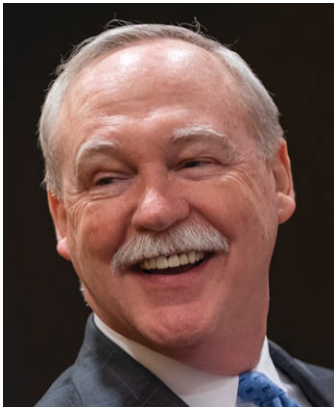
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PIONEER'S
LEGACY PAGE 10



INNOVATION
IN SURGERY:
HIGH-TECH "MOST"
LAB OPENS PAGE 8



JOSEPH P. BILSON
Chief Executive Officer



JULIA A. HALLER, MD
Ophthalmologist-in-Chief

Welcome to *Eye Level*, Wills Eye Hospital's newly relaunched newsletter.

In it, we aim to give you an inside view of what is happening at Wills Eye. For much of 2020, we and the world have been focused on understanding, adapting to and overcoming the challenges posed by COVID-19. In these pages, you will see how we have met these unprecedented challenges. Given the uncertainty that reigned at the start of the pandemic, we are especially proud of the acts of courage of each member of the Wills Eye family. They left their homes and loved ones each day to make sure Wills Eye could serve all patients in need with safety, efficiency and compassion.

For many patients, being able to access eye care can mean the difference between permanent vision loss and saving their sight. In the early weeks, Wills Eye cared for those patients with medically necessary, time-sensitive diagnoses that required procedures and surgeries that couldn't be delayed. Even when government officials halted all elective procedures, we were still able to perform close to 700 successful emergency surgeries. As of this printing, services have expanded to include non-emergency care. In this issue, we highlight a few of our courageous patients. We are grateful to them and to all patients who place their trust in us.

“For many patients, being able to access eye care can mean the difference between permanent vision loss and saving their sight.”

Some of the stories in this newsletter were written before the pandemic — such as the highlights about the William Maul Measey Ophthalmic Surgical Training Laboratory (MOST Lab) and J. Arch McNamara, MD Ophthalmic Education Center (hence the lack of masks in the photos). Each space is in active use, but with new safety protocols.

French novelist Marcel Proust once wrote, “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but seeing with new eyes.” As many of us continue to stay close to home, we have to look with new eyes at where we are right now: seeing what we're up against, seeing what we have accomplished, seeing what we are capable of and, most of all, seeing the best in all of us.

We wish you all good health and peace of mind throughout this difficult time. ■■■

WILLS EYE HOSPITAL AND OUR PHYSICIANS ARE AWARDED TOP HONORS



Wills Eye Earns Top Ranking on U.S. News & World Report's Best Hospitals List After Nationwide Vote by Ophthalmologists
Hospital's Outstanding Reputation for Treating Complex Conditions Is Recognized in 31st Consecutive Year of Survey



Wills Eye Ophthalmologists Make Global Power List with Wills Oncology Chief Chosen #1 Most Influential in the World



Wills Eye Leads Ophthalmology List on Philadelphia Magazine's Top Docs Annual Survey

To view the full list of honorees, visit www.willseye.org

PLEASE WELCOME OUR NEW CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER



John J. Zabinski, a leader in higher education and healthcare fundraising, has been named Chief Development Officer at Wills Eye. Formerly Senior Vice President for

Rowan University Advancement and Executive Director of the Rowan University Foundation, Zabinski helped deploy a range of creative fundraising initiatives to build a professional development program, which provided the financial resources the university needed to be a leader in the region and beyond. While at Rowan, Zabinski planned and launched the university's first comprehensive campaign with a goal of \$120 million. Zabinski also served as Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Drexel University, where he helped manage principal and major gift activities for 20 colleges and schools. At Drexel, he was a key part of the senior management team and the architect of a \$400 million comprehensive campaign, which surpassed the goal by \$55 million. He also oversaw fundraising at Saint Joseph's University and Valley Forge Military Academy and College. He both led and was involved with fundraising efforts at The Episcopal Academy, Sacred Heart Hospital and Villanova University. John can be reached at JZabinski@willseye.org and 215-440-3153.

Eye Level

NEWS & VIEWS FROM WILLS EYE HOSPITAL
FALL 2020
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Time to See Your Eye Doctor?

How Wills Eye Is Continuing Care and Keeping You Safe During COVID-19

When government restrictions permitted emergency-only care this spring, Wills Eye performed close to 700 successful urgent surgeries. Our healthcare teams stayed in close touch with patients around the world to determine which eye care needs were time-sensitive or could be rescheduled. Our staff members also spoke with patients and families about their overall health and well-being. This is what we see as treating the whole patient. Now, at the time of this writing, care has expanded to include all eye procedures from the most common to the rare and complex.

To read about three patients' experiences during the time of COVID, see page 12.

As you return to Wills Eye, our ongoing commitment to your safety has never been greater. COVID-19 is expected to be around for a long time and certain vision issues cannot be delayed. If you're uncertain about your own situation, check with your doctor. Wills Eye is closely following all government and CDC guidelines to ensure the highest level of safety for patients and staff. As you prepare to return for care, please keep in mind the following protocols:

Before Your Visit

- Have a face mask ready to wear to your visit.
- Make sure to complete all paperwork before the day of your appointment.
- Consult office staff about waiting procedures and parking options.
- If you've been exposed to someone with coronavirus, traveled to a high-risk area or are experiencing symptoms, please consult your doctor and follow quarantine recommendations.
- Ask if any appointments can be scheduled via telemedicine.

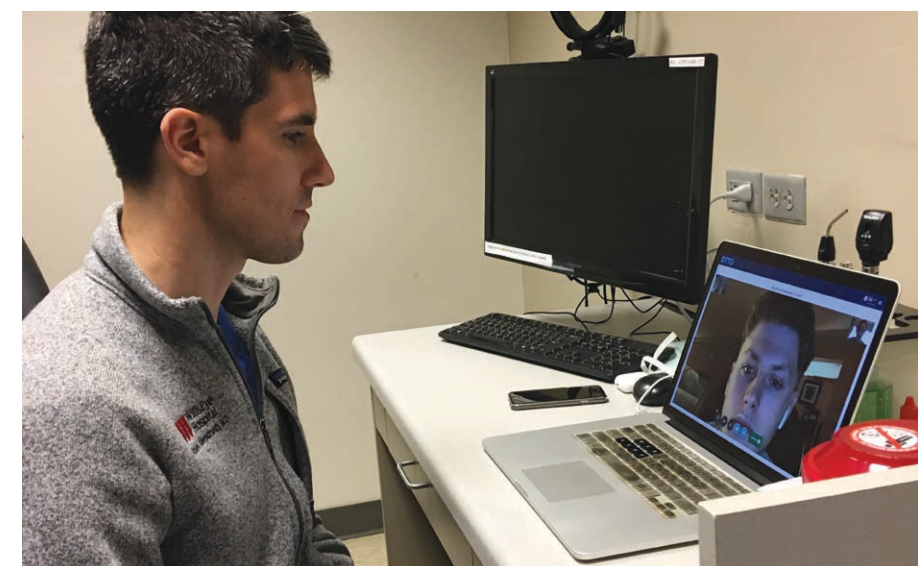
On the Day of Your Visit

- Face masks are required for everyone entering Wills Eye.
- All patients should enter through the front entrance at 840 Walnut Street.
- Check with office staff or Willseye.org website for our updated visitor policy.
- Leave extra time for health screening upon arrival.
- Please arrive in your physician's office at the scheduled time. Offices at Wills Eye are staggering appointments to provide more open space for patients.

For the most up-to-date information about COVID-related practices at Wills Eye Hospital and other Wills locations, visit www.willseye.org/covid19



Above: CEO Joseph P. Bilson joins a global video conference call with other hospital executives while alone in the Wills Eye boardroom.
Below: Michael Abendroth, MD, MBA, conducts a telemedicine visit.



Far left: Temperature checks are mandatory for staff, patients and visitors as they enter the hospital. **Top center:** Carol L. Shields, MD, Director of the Ocular Oncology Service, performs an exam under anesthesia (EUA) on a pediatric cancer patient to confirm successful treatment. **Bottom center:** Patients briefly wait to see the doctor in a much less crowded Wills Eye Hospital waiting room.

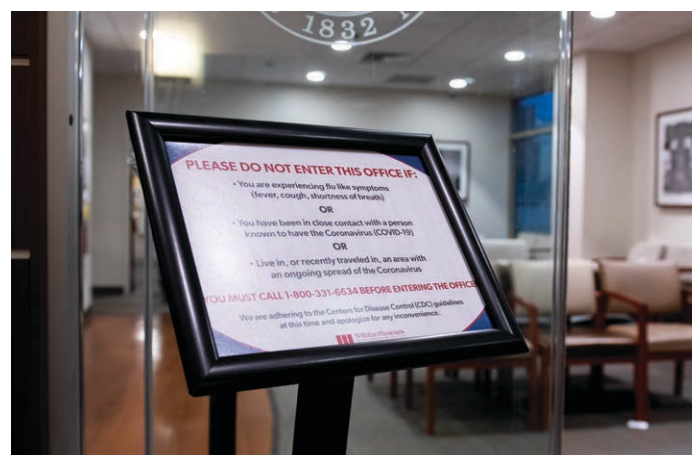
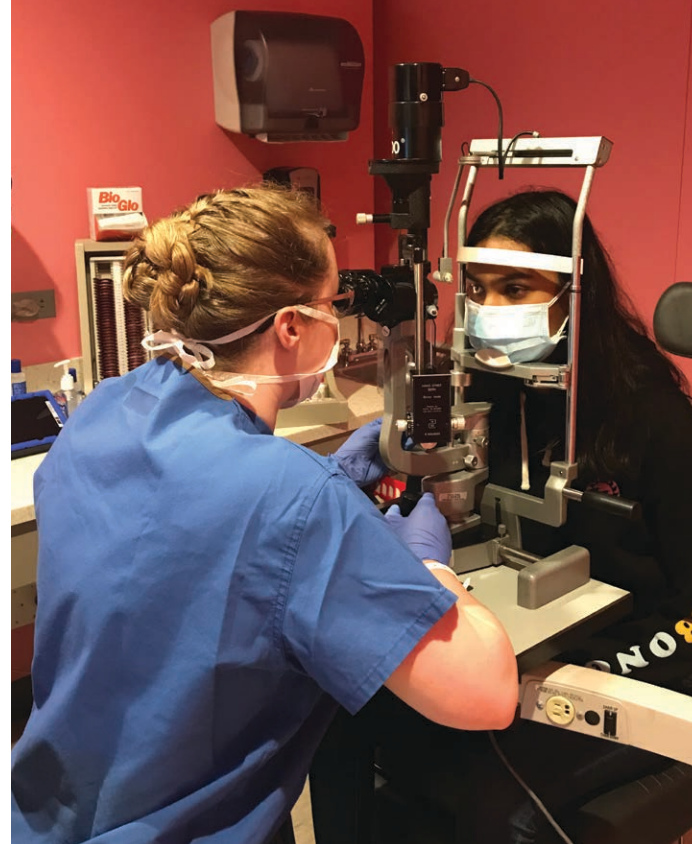




Above: Chief Nursing Officer Greg Passanante, RN, MBA, CNOR, leads a socially-distanced huddle with fellow nurses.
Below left: Anesthesiologist Debbie Lippman, MD, dons full PPE (personal protective equipment) before a procedure.



Above left: Facilities Management teams installed plexiglass shields at every office and clinic to protect staff and patients.
Above right: All patients, visitors and staff are screened for COVID-19 symptoms and risk factors upon entry.



Top left: Pediatric ophthalmologist Jade M. Price, MD, examines a patient when only emergency care was permitted.
Bottom left: COVID-related signage was installed throughout all Wills Eye buildings to help keep patients and staff members safe.
Top right: Ophthalmologist-in-Chief Julia A. Haller, MD, leads one of many meetings about Wills Eye's COVID-19 response.
Bottom right: Retina specialist Sunir J. Garg, MD, appears on a national ABC Network show to discuss COVID-related eye questions.

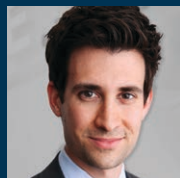


Top left: Patient Dorothy Pasznik and her husband Michael, of Toms River, New Jersey, have an easy time checking in for their office visit.
Top right: Donna Frasco of Mill Neck, New York, sees Wills Eye Cornea Service Chief Christopher J. Rapuano, MD, for a routine visit. "It was great to see so many precautions being taken. I hadn't left my house since March!" —D.F.

WILLS EYE WELCOMES A NEW GENERATION OF PHYSICIANS



John C. Anhalt, MD, joins Wills Eye Hospital as an attending physician on the Cataract and Primary Eye Care Service. An alumnus of Wills Eye, Dr. Anhalt spent his fellowship year traveling the world treating patients with blinding eye disease in underdeveloped countries as part of the Wills Academic Global Ophthalmology Program. Dr. Anhalt was born and raised in Rochester, Minnesota, and completed his undergraduate education at Trinity University in San Antonio. He then spent several years with the Peace Corps teaching in a rural mountain village in Lesotho before attending medical school at the University of Texas, San Antonio, and completing his residency here at Wills Eye Hospital.



Michael N. Cohen, MD, returns to Wills Eye after completing his residency at Wills as Co-Chief followed by a retina fellowship at Tufts. He has published and presented research at national meetings, including The Retina Society, The American Society of Retinal Specialists and The Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO).



Brenton Finklea, MD, is a board-certified ophthalmologist with specialty training in cornea, external disease and refractive surgery. He earned his medical degree at University of Virginia School of Medicine and completed his internship at Inova Fairfax Hospital and Georgetown University Hospital. Dr. Finklea spent his residency at Wills Eye followed by fellowships in academic global ophthalmology, where he traveled around the world teaching ophthalmology and eye surgery.



Nadia Haqqie, MD, is a comprehensive ophthalmologist with Wills Eye's Cataract and Primary Eye Care Service. Dr. Haqqie received her medical degree *cum laude* from Albany Medical College in Albany, New York, where she was elected to the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society her junior year. She stayed on at Albany to complete her residency, serving as chief resident during her final year. She completed fellowship training in cornea, cataract and refractive surgery at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York. Her areas of interest include dry eye and cataract surgery.



Aditya Kanasa-thasan, MD, joins the Cornea Service at Wills Eye, where he is focusing on cataract, cornea and anterior segment surgery and care for patients with all types of ocular surface disease. Dr. Kanasa-thasan graduated from Northwestern University where he received both his undergraduate and medical degrees. He completed his residency at Wills Eye and a cornea fellowship at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in Miami. He has a special interest in advancing medical technologies and looks forward to working on surgical education with the Wills Eye residents.



M. Ali Khan, MD, returns to our Retina Service after serving on the faculty of the Doheny & Stein Eye Institutes at UCLA. He completed his residency, Chief residency, and fellowship at Wills Eye. Dr. Khan is active in clinical research and has authored numerous scientific publications on vitreo-retinal diseases.



Natasha Nayak Kolomeyer, MD, joins Wills Eye after completing her glaucoma fellowship at Wills and her residency at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai Health System. Dr. Kolomeyer is a peer-reviewed, published researcher, has served on committees for two of the largest ophthalmology organizations and has expertise in medical and surgical management of glaucoma including Minimally Invasive Glaucoma Surgery (MIGS).



Ajay E. Kuriyan, MD, joins Wills Eye from Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, New York, and the University of Rochester, where he was a faculty member and retina surgeon. Dr. Kuriyan completed his residency and fellowship at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute.



Jade M. Price, MD, joins the Pediatric Ophthalmology Service after completing her residency at Beaumont Health System in Royal Oak, Michigan, and a fellowship in pediatric and adult strabismus at Wills Eye.



Sathyadeepak (Deepak) Ramesh, MD, who specializes in orbital and oculofacial plastic surgery, is a member of the Oculoplastics Service at Wills Eye and Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University. Dr. Ramesh spent his residency at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School, completed his fellowship at Jules Stein/UCLA and achieved additional specialty training in Seoul, South Korea.



Aakriti Garg Shukla, MD, joins the Wills Eye Glaucoma Service after training at Johns Hopkins University. Her primary research interests include imaging in glaucoma, identifying risk factors for visual field progression, and the impact glaucoma has on quality of life for her patients.



Melissa R. Sieber, MD, who completed her residency at Wills Eye as Co-Chief, now returns to Wills as a comprehensive ophthalmologist on the Cataract and Primary Eye Care Service. She performs LASIK and PRK along with Minimally Invasive Glaucoma Surgeries (MIGS).



Zeba A. Syed, MD, is a *summa cum laude* graduate of Harvard College and a graduate of Harvard Medical School. Dr. Syed specializes in cornea, cataract and refractive surgery. The author of numerous book chapters and peer-reviewed articles, Dr. Syed received prestigious awards during her training, including the Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Fellowship and the Resident Excellence Award from the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery.



Alison H. Watson, MD, is now a member of the Oculoplastics Service after a fellowship in Austin, Texas. She is highly skilled in all areas of oculoplastics and orbital surgery, including both functional and cosmetic eyelid surgery, facial reconstruction, fracture repair and thyroid eye disease.



Brett Weinstock, MD, serves on the Cataract and Primary Eye Care Service as a comprehensive ophthalmologist at Wills Eye. Dr. Weinstock graduated *magna cum laude* from Brown University, graduated from Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City, was inducted into the prestigious Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society and completed his residency at Wills Eye.



Yoshihiro Yonekawa, MD, joins Wills Eye from Boston, where he was Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School and Director of Pediatric Retina Surgery at Boston Children's Hospital. He specializes in pediatric and adult retina and has published over 250 original research papers, editorials and textbook chapters to advance the field.

AWARDS & HONORS

Jurij R. Bilyk, MD, and his colleagues from Wills Eye and the Jefferson Neuroscience and Pathology teams received the Best National Research Award from the American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

Sunir J. Garg, MD, is Chair of Retina for the American Academy of Ophthalmology's (AAO's) Ophthalmic News and Education (ONE) Network and a clinical spokesperson for the Academy. He was presented with the 2019 Gold Medal from Dr. Agarwal's Eye Hospital in India.

Ravi D. Goel, MD, recently began a three-year term as the AAO's Senior Secretary for Ophthalmic Practice and is an AAO clinical spokesperson.

Julia A. Haller, MD, was elected to the National Academy of Medicine and will receive the prestigious Charles L. Schepens, MD, Award this year. The award and gold medal are presented at Retina Subspecialty Day at the Annual American Academy of Ophthalmology meeting. Dr. Haller was chosen by a special committee. The award and honor are named for Charles Schepens who is regarded by many as the "father of modern retinal surgery."

Sadeer B. Hannush, MD, received the EUCornea Medal and was the invited Guest Lecturer at the European Society of Cataract & Refractive Surgeons.

Allen C. Ho, MD, was appointed President of the Retina Society. He also received the Aspen Retinal Detachment Society Founders Award 2019 and the Taylor Smith 2019 Medal from the New England Ophthalmology Society.

Alex V. Levin, MD, MHSc, was recently invited to join the Editorial Board of *Ophthalmic Genetics* and received an Honorary Award from his alma mater, Muhlenberg College.

Mark L. Moster, MD, received the American Academy of Neurology Abstract of Distinction 2019 and is Vice President of the North American Neuro-Ophthalmology Society (2018-present).

Tatyana Milman, MD, received the American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery's Merrill Reeh Pathology Award 2019 for Outstanding Contribution and best article of the year.

Christopher J. Rapuano, MD, is the AAO's Senior Secretary for Clinical Education and a member of the AAO Board of Trustees.

Carl D. Regillo, MD, received the distinguished Founders Award from the American Society of Retina Specialists in July. The award is presented to individuals who have made major contributions to the advancement of vitreoretinal surgery, treatment research, surgical instrumentation and patient care.

Carol L. Shields, MD, is the new President of the Macula Society and delivered the Wendell L. Hughes Lecture at the 2019 AAO Annual Meeting.

Jerry A. Shields, MD, received the 2019 Lucien Howe Medal from the American Ophthalmological Society and, in May 2020, was inducted into the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery Hall of Fame.

George L. Spaeth, MD, presented the 2019 Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science Department of Ophthalmology Commencement Address.

State-of-the-Art Lab Offers the “MOST” in Surgical Training

\$1 Million Gift From Private Foundation Powers Project

This article was written and photos were taken prior to COVID-19. The Lab has remained open and continues to be vitally important to trainees. All CDC and state health and safety guidelines are in effect.

“We interviewed all around the country for our fellowships, and this is by far the nicest wet lab out there because of its size, technology offered and, of course, the breadth of professional faculty who train right by our side,” said Samir Patel, MD, a 2020 graduate of the Wills Eye Residency Program.

Dr. Patel is one of many residents, fellows, attending physicians, faculty and industry partners who have been eager to use the cutting-edge William Maul Measey Ophthalmic Surgical Training (MOST) Laboratory since it opened in fall 2019. Located on the 8th floor of the hospital, side-by-side with the new J. Arch McNamara, MD Ophthalmic Education Center, the completely renovated \$1.5 million “smart room” was over a year in the making.

“It is arguably the best ophthalmic surgical training lab in the world.”

— Doug Wisner, MD, MOST Lab Director, Co-Director of the Surgical Training Program and Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University

The Lab’s high-tech set up has already been turning heads. But it’s literally “turning heads” in an ergonomically improved way. Each of the fully equipped work stations has an operating microscope integrated into a high-definition smart screen with recording capabilities. And they’re ideally designed for improving posture and reducing fatigue, helping to lessen the well-documented risk of strain and injury that career surgeons face. Two surgical simulators and four phacoemulsification units are also on hand. Basic and advanced surgical skills that health professionals can learn or brush up on include phacoemulsification (the newest technique for removing cataracts), manual small-incision cataract surgery, corneoscleral suturing, corneal transplantation, Minimally Invasive Glaucoma Surgery (MIGS) and novel/device procedure training, to name a few.



All photos were taken prior to COVID-19.

Above: The Lab in use. **Middle:** Attendings, residents and technicians are among those frequently using the Lab. **Below:** Lab Director Doug Wisner, MD, discusses a surgical method with second-year Wills Eye resident Rakhi Melvani, MD.



“Simulation has been recognized as a pillar of high-quality surgical training across a number of subspecialties,” said Brent Finklea, MD, attending physician on the Wills Eye Cornea Service, who has been teaching courses since the lab opened. “This world-class facility is offering residents the opportunity to learn and practice some of the most challenging surgical techniques in a controlled environment.”

The MOST lab was made possible by a \$1 million leadership grant from the Benjamin and Mary Siddons Measey Foundation of Media, Pennsylvania. The Wills Eye Alumni Society and private gifts provided the remainder of the funding. Measey, a private foundation dedicated to medical education throughout the Philadelphia region, recognizes the need for advanced technology and hands-on training in microsurgical techniques, particularly in the field of ophthalmology. The grant enabled Wills’ leaders to propel their educational dreams into a reality that has become a shining example throughout the greater ophthalmological community.

Among the recent requests for use of the lab were a popular intraocular lens (IOL) fixation class and a complex cataract surgery course.

“It is arguably the best ophthalmic surgical training lab in the world,” said Doug Wisner, MD, MOST Lab Director, Co-Director of the Surgical Training Program and Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University.

“We’re very proud of everything that went into conceptualizing and building it. We feel that the Lab offers tremendous opportunities and the ‘MOST’ in surgical training.” ■

All photos were taken prior to COVID-19.

Below: Former resident Erin Nichols, MD, works to become proficient at fixating a lens implant to the wall of the eye.



All photos were taken prior to COVID-19.

Above: Wills Eye surgeon Christina McGowan, MD, teaches a new technique. **Below:** Wills Eye former Co-Chief Resident Michael D. Abendroth, MD, talks with a colleague in the Lab.



For more information, contact Lab Manager Marie Fiorillo at MFiorillo@willseye.org

For additional naming opportunities, please contact the Development Office at 215-440-3154

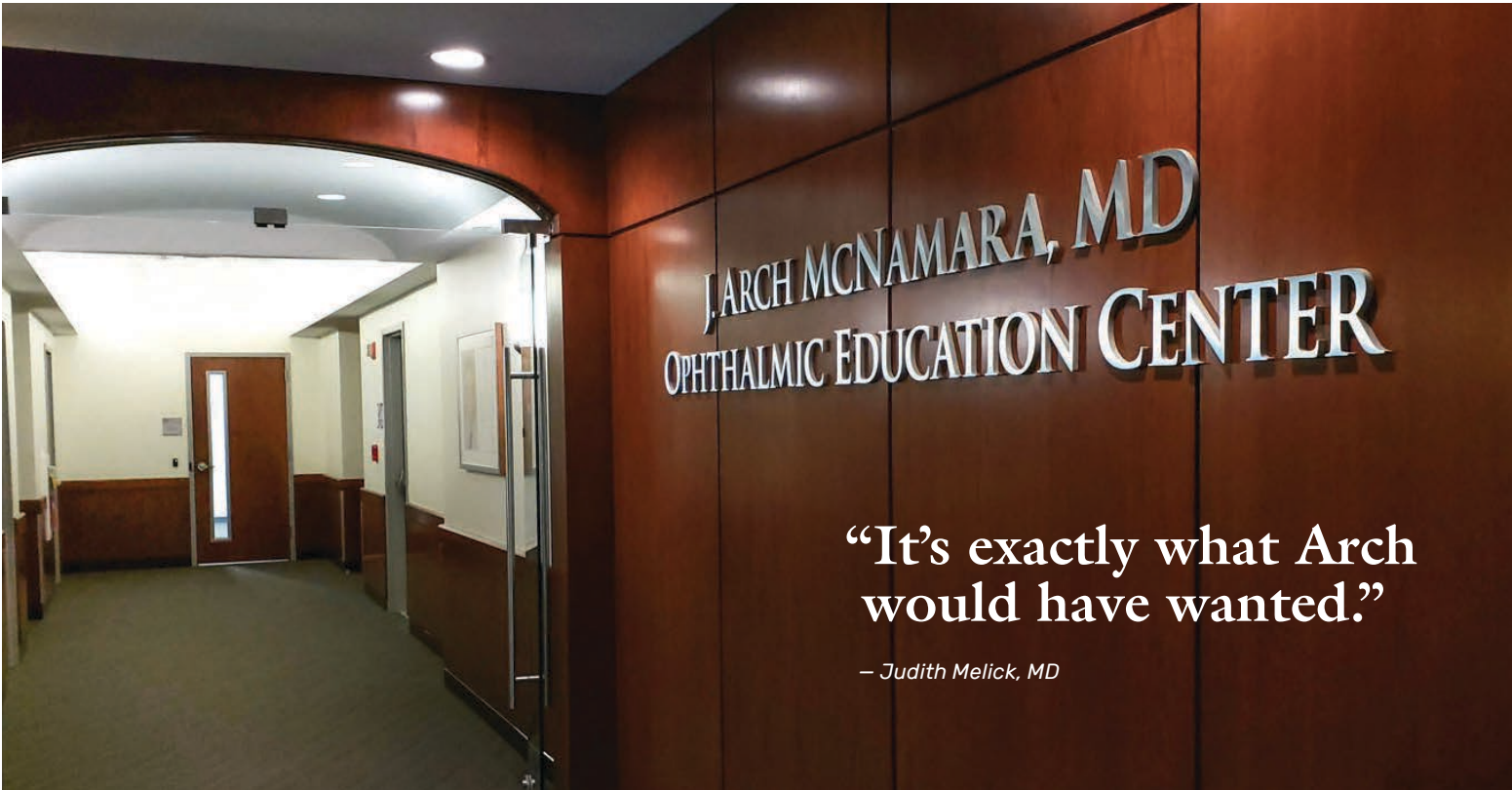


J. Arch McNamara, MD Ophthalmic Education Center

Honoring a Retina Pioneer’s Legacy



All photos were taken prior to COVID-19.
Left: J. Arch McNamara, MD, a member of the Wills Eye Retina Service for over two decades.
Right: Making the dedication and the day even sweeter for Dr. Melick was having all five of Dr. McNamara’s sisters attend the Wills event. (L to R) Eleanor McCarthy, Mary Parsons, Kelly McNamara, CeAnn McNamara, Frances Cook and Judith Melick, MD.
Far Right: Wedding photo of J. Arch McNamara, MD, and Judith Melick, MD, taken in 1984.



“It’s exactly what Arch would have wanted.”
— Judith Melick, MD

“Arch was an extraordinary teacher, physician, surgeon and human being who made a lasting impact on everyone he touched.”

— Julia A. Haller, MD, Wills Ophthalmologist-in-Chief



Above: William Benson, MD, spoke about his longtime colleague and dear friend, Dr. McNamara.



Above: A standing-room-only crowd attended the dedication this past fall. **All photos were taken prior to COVID-19.**



All photos were taken prior to COVID-19.
Above: (L to R) David McNamara (son), Judith Melick, MD, Kelly McNamara, MD (daughter).

After the sudden death of her husband, Arch, in a scuba diving accident in 2010, Judith Melick, MD, knew she wanted to do something philanthropic to solidify his legacy. She considered many options based on his passions and interests, but nothing was quite resonating for her and her family. Then, one evening when she was speaking with Wills Ophthalmologist-in-Chief Julia A. Haller, MD, it became abundantly clear.

“I knew how much Arch loved Wills, loved his colleagues and especially loved teaching the residents and fellows,” said Dr. Melick, a Wills-trained ophthalmologist who feels equally at home among all the friends and colleagues the couple shared. “When Julia and I started talking about all the exciting, upcoming educational programs and plans at Wills and how its premier residency program continues to be voted top in the U.S. each year, I felt that upgrading and expanding the space is exactly what Arch would have wanted. It rang bells for me. We would even build an ‘archway’ for him. Now, over a year later, it’s better than I ever imagined.”

The newly renovated and reimagined 8th floor of Wills Eye Hospital is now home to the J. Arch McNamara, MD Ophthalmic Education Center. This transformational destination for global learning and innovation was officially dedicated on September 18, 2019. With the help of a generous \$1 million gift from the McNamara family, the space has been upgraded with next-generation state-of-the-art tools, integrated IT delivery systems

and livestreaming capabilities. It is a high-tech international hub matching the full and exclusive roster of academic courses, lectures and events slated for this year and into the future.

Dr. McNamara was a beloved surgeon, clinician-investigator, educator and leader on the Wills Retina Service. He attended medical school at Memorial University of Newfoundland and trained in vitreoretinal surgery at Wills Eye. He is renowned for his groundbreaking work with laser photocoagulation in the treatment of retinopathy of prematurity, a blinding eye disease. His advances gave hope to families around the globe with premature babies afflicted with the rare and devastating condition.

“We are so grateful to Dr. Melick and the McNamara family for their generosity,” said Dr. Haller. “Arch was an extraordinary teacher, physician, surgeon and human being who made a lasting impact on everyone he touched. It is so fitting that he will be memorialized in this way, continually inspiring us with his dedication to excellence and learning.”

Monica Winter, former Wills Eye Director of Foundation Relations, echoed that sentiment: “We especially appreciate Dr. Melick’s forward-looking decision to support endowment and current use funds. This hybrid gift provides flexible funding that will help ensure the McNamara Center’s continued growth as a leading global educational powerhouse.”



Above: Wills Eye Hospital Chief Executive Officer Joseph P. Bilson during his remarks.

Our Patients' View

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Wills Eye Hospital has continued caring for patients through in-person and telemedicine visits, emergency or urgent procedures and at the Wills Eye Emergency Department at Jefferson. At the time of this printing, Wills Eye and our network of surgery centers throughout the region have expanded services to include non-emergency care.

Meet three patients who decided to go ahead with their procedures – even while so many people remained on lockdown – as the pandemic tore through the tri-state region.

When Anthony Manchio needed two emergency surgeries, he went straight to Wills Eye.



This past April, 76-year-old Anthony Manchio of Broomall, Pennsylvania, injured his left eye while restoring an antique car in his garage. He had taken his safety glasses off for a moment to read a diagram — and in a split second, a piece of the exhaust system blew off and struck him in the eye. He had already faced more than his share of eye problems recently, including the removal of a fatty tumor from his left eye, cataract surgery and, before that, laser surgery for glaucoma. His local eye doctor found some damage to the eye and sent him to Michael Klufas, MD, of the Wills Eye Retina Service, who recommended surgery for a dislocated lens caused by the trauma. Anthony agreed, but the thought of having surgery in a downtown hospital during the height of a pandemic was frightening.

“The first time I went I was really scared. But then when I saw all the precautions, I felt better,” he said. “My wife and I parked in the Wills garage and walked right into the building. We had our temperatures taken at the door and everyone was wearing protective equipment. There was even someone to push the elevator button for us!” Anthony’s wife has diabetes, which puts her in a high-risk group, but he noted that even she felt comfortable.

During a post-surgical follow-up, Dr. Klufas discovered that the pressure levels in Anthony’s eyes were dangerously high, likely due to the many eye procedures he’d had in fairly quick succession. He immediately sent Anthony to see Aakriti Shukla, MD, who recommended same-day emergency surgery to place a shunt in his left eye to relieve the pressure. That procedure, combined with the use of drops in both eyes, brought the pressure down from a vision-threatening 40+ reading to 10 and 12, respectively.

“If they had not moved as quickly as they did, I would have been in real trouble,” Anthony said. “I could very well have lost my vision. I have the highest respect in the world for those two doctors. And I have no issues with going downtown to access that level of care.”

“I could very well have lost my vision. I have the highest respect in the world for those two doctors.”

“In fact, when Dr. Shukla asked if I wanted to have follow-ups closer to home, I said, ‘No way, you are my doctor and that is how I want to keep it!’

“The way I could see before going to Wills versus how I can see now is a blessing,” he added.

Patricia Fazzini moved forward with cataract surgery despite the pandemic.



In early 2020, 66-year old Pat Fazzini of Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, scheduled her first cataract surgery at a nearby Wills Eye Surgery Center for the month of March. Like many new cataract patients, the active mother and grandmother had been struggling with her vision during simple and routine pleasures such as watching TV and reading. But when COVID-19 hit and all but emergency surgeries and procedures were cancelled, Pat was okay with sitting it out for a while. She had spoken to her surgeon, Robert S. Bailey, Jr., MD, and together they decided to reschedule for May. However, she still wanted to take a wait-and-see approach and assess how it would all play out closer to the actual date.

As the surgery drew closer, Pat consulted with her husband and two daughters, who are both nurses, and decided to place her trust in Dr. Bailey and Wills Eye — even though all the news and turmoil were not quieting down. “My husband and I had been on total lockdown; we hadn’t gone anywhere in three months,” Pat said. “We were getting everything delivered and weren’t even seeing our kids, which was the hardest part. Once I spoke to the Wills Eye staff before the surgery and understood all of the safety measures they had in place, I felt reassured. My anxiety wasn’t completely gone, but I had full faith in my Wills Eye doctor and staff.”

Pat had successful cataract surgery in May and proceeded with surgery on her other eye two weeks later. “My advice to others delaying eye care because of concerns would be to talk to your doctor, understand everything they’re doing and move forward with health appointments that will improve your quality of life. Yes, planning anything these days comes with anxiety and uncertainty, but when you are entrusting Wills Eye with your care, you’ll be glad you did it. You can check whatever you’re having done off your list — while at the same time staying safe.”

For Ruth Rocco, visits to Wills Eye are essential outings.



Ruth Rocco went to her doctor faithfully for 11 years to get injections for macular degeneration. “I never missed an appointment and was always on schedule and on time. The pandemic got everything off track,” said 94-year old Ruth of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

At first, Ruth and her family felt that going out involved more risk than reward due to her age. For close to three months, she stayed at home in her assisted living facility where every precautionary measure was taken. No visitors were allowed and staff would even leave meals at her door. But then one day, at her daughter’s urging, Ruth called her eye doctor’s office to ask about resuming her care.

“Mrs. Rocco had delayed care out of an abundance of caution, but we were becoming concerned that she might suffer irreparable vision loss without injections,” said Jason Hsu, MD. “Once she came in, we realized she had lost some ground and were concerned it might be permanent. Fortunately, a month after that visit and injection, she’s now close to her previous baseline and can read again.”

“I’m going to Dr. Hsu more often now than ever before because he wants to keep a close check on it,” Ruth said.

“To be honest, I am so happy that my daughter forced me to go. They did a perfect job with all of the safety measures: there was little waiting in the office, they took my temperature when I arrived, and the whole time I really didn’t see another patient. I’ve lived through the depression, wars, all the twists and turns of the stock market, kids and grandchildren, but this pandemic is something entirely new.”

Ruth is still playing it safe and staying at home for the most part. She remains inside working on her family history to keep herself busy. “My advice to others deciding what to do? I’d say be cautious but if it’s an eye appointment, try to keep it.” ■

For more success stories, visit www.willseye.org

Have a Wills Eye success story you’d like to share? Please contact Cathy Moss at cmoss@willseye.org



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OPTICAL SHOPS AT WILLS EYE

All three retail locations are open
with full safety measures in place
to keep you seeing well

f you’ve been at home the last several months
and need to update your prescription for new
eyeglasses or restock your contact lenses, Wills
Eye Optical Shops are open and available.

The newest optical location on the Concourse
Level of The Fashion District Philadelphia (site of
the former Gallery Mall) opened to much fanfare
when the Mall debuted last fall. The store joins the
other locations, all known as “Wills Eye Wear.”

Every store is keeping customers safe by schedul-
ing advance appointments, limiting the number of

Above: Wills Eye Wear, 12th Floor, Wills Eye Hospital, 840 Walnut Street.

shoppers, requiring masks and offering personalized service from
an optician who can assist with and sanitize glasses. “It’s an
extension of the outstanding care at Wills Eye Hospital. One-stop-
shopping – a seamless process from start to finish,” said Joe
Frattali, Director, Wills Eye Optical Program and Development.

Information on all Wills Eye Wear locations:
willseye.org/medical-services/optical-shop