

A SIT-DOWN WITH KAMMI B. GUNTON, MD

Meet the New Chief of the Pediatric Ophthalmology Service

Dr. Gunton has been with the service since 2003 and was named Chief in March 2022.

Q. What does this new role at Wills mean to you?

A. I am humbled and honored to be selected as Service Chief. Being at Wills is to be surrounded by smart, caring individuals that always put the patient first and challenge you to push the frontier of excellent care. I am thrilled to be amongst this vibrant community and advocate for the needs of children. I was fortunate to train with Drs. Joseph Calhoun and Alex Levin, who exemplified a dedication to patients and the vital role of teaching the next generation of pediatric ophthalmologists that I hope to emulate.

Q. Your research on the *Visual Consequences of Virtual School* on children's eyesight has garnered national recognition. Can you share your motivation for the research, your findings and any recommendations as a result?

A. This study stems from the concerns many parents have regarding the increased amount of time that children are spending on computers and electronic devices. Virtual schooling presented the opportunity to query over 100 adolescents following a day spent online. We found that 61 percent of healthy children with no prior visual complaints developed symptoms related to focusing, with 17 percent reaching a level of complaint consistent with convergence insufficiency (an inability to keep both eyes focused on the same near point, leading to blurred or double vision while reading).

Although there is no consensus on the direct impact of screen time on vision, parents should be aware of the potential for visual challenges. Whenever possible, parents should direct their children to incorporate rest time off the screen. I suggest the 20/20/20 rule: for every 20 minutes on screen, rest eyes by looking 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

Q. Can you share any goals or plans for the future of the service?

A. Our most pressing goal is to address the needs of the children in our community who have not

been able to access eye care. We will continue to partner and strengthen our relationships with school nurses and pediatricians. We plan to expand the annual *Give Kids Sight Day*, which is hosted by Wills and provides free eye care and glasses to children. I hope to increase collaboration among our Wills pediatric ophthalmology colleagues as well as those in the community, opening a myriad of educational opportunities. Recognizing the national shortage of pediatric ophthalmologists, I want to expand the training of general ophthalmology residents in the critical aspects of children's eye care.

Q. What is unique about the Wills Pediatric Ophthalmology Service?

A. Pediatrics is unique in our ability to change the course of visual development for our patients. I take this responsibility seriously, but I also know what a joy it is to work with children. Nothing is more rewarding than playing an integral role in a child discovering their vision.

Q. Tell us about your relationship with Wills and what makes it such a special place?

A. People are what makes Wills so special. It begins when you walk into the building and security personnel smile and wish you a good day, to patient service representatives, managers, administration, building maintenance, residents, fellows and attendings. I am so fortunate to work with an amazing team of pediatric ophthalmologists. I have such respect for my colleagues, and their support has been overwhelming as I take on this new role. Everyone is striving for excellence. Wills creates that atmosphere. From the moment I began my residency, through my fellowship and beyond, I have always felt that Wills is home. ■■■



FAST FACTS

KAMMI B. GUNTON, MD

Age: 53

Spouse: Jim Gunton

Children: Matthew, 22; John, 18; Samantha, 18.

Favorite music: Soft rock, oldies.

Career highlights: Started strabismus surgery practical course, the opportunity to mentor pediatric research and clinical fellows.

Favorite food: Chocolate anything.

Favorite hobby: Drawing.

Favorite ritual: I always wear my lucky socks for every surgery; they've been mended multiple times but are still going strong.