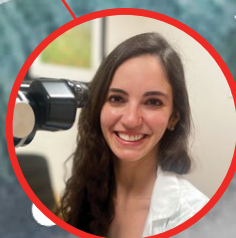


Eye Level

FALL 2022

News & Views From Wills Eye Hospital



THE NEXT CHAPTER: NEW ATTENDINGS JOIN WILLS EYE TEAM

PAGE 2



MEET THE CHIEF OF
PEDIATRIC SERVICE
KAMMI B. GUNTON, MD

PAGE 1



THOMAS BROWN II
A NEW LEASE
ON LIFE

PAGE 5

From Our Leaders



JULIA A. HALLER, MD
Ophthalmologist-in-Chief

JOSEPH P. BILSON
Chief Executive Officer

Greetings and welcome to the Fall 2022 issue of *Eye Level*. As we turn the page to September, we have much to be excited about here at Wills Eye Hospital. With the new academic year in full swing, we are filled with pride in our nearly 200-year mission—to innovate and lead in education, research, and patient care.

We have enhanced and fine-tuned our academic offerings, expanded our reach with the addition of offices in the Philadelphia suburbs, and grown our medical staff with remarkable and talented new faculty, residents, and fellows. Our world-class physicians, researchers, technicians, and support staff work collaboratively in state-of-the-art facilities that have become increasingly accessible throughout the Philadelphia region, the nation, and beyond.

This issue’s cover story (pages 2 and 3) will introduce you to four new attending physicians. Each of these bright, dedicated faculty members brings a unique set of skills and expertise, not to mention groundbreaking research. We are so impressed with the breadth and depth of their backgrounds and feel so fortunate that they have joined our ranks.

Speaking of talent and research, on page 1, you’ll meet Kammi B. Gunton, MD, our new Chief of Pediatric Ophthalmology. Dr. Gunton, a member of the pediatric service since 2003, shares her observations, goals, and findings of her nationally recognized research on the ophthalmic impact of virtual schooling on children.

Our long-standing Wills Eye Ball tradition returned on June 25 at The Union League of Philadelphia (page 4). Our first in-person gala since 2019 (due to the pandemic), there were over 300 people in attendance as we honored renowned

surgeons Robert S. Bailey Jr., MD, Mark H. Blecher, MD, and the Cataract and Primary Eye Care Service.

And Thomas Brown II (story on page 5), was thrilled to relay his life-changing experience as a patient of Dr. Bailey’s. The Philadelphia-based musician/church organist is so grateful for the care provided by Dr. Bailey and the Wills Eye staff, he is spreading the word throughout his community about the value of medical intervention in preserving vision.

As an academic institution, we look at endings and beginnings. This past June, we celebrated the graduation of

“We have enhanced and fine-tuned our academic offerings, expanded our reach with the addition of offices in the Philadelphia suburbs, and grown our medical staff with remarkable and talented new faculty, residents, and fellows.”

our Resident and Fellowship Class of 2022 (photos on page 5). We are proud to witness these dedicated young physicians take their Wills experience onto their next chapter. We are confident that the education and training they received at Wills has prepared them for their new careers in ophthalmology. We wish them all the very best and much success!

Yet, as we bid farewell to our graduates, we also welcome the Resident Class of 2025. These eight impressive physicians began their Wills training in July. We are also proud to welcome the Class of 2026, who will begin their Post Graduate Year 1 at Jefferson.

We are very excited to see what this next academic year holds and wish you and your family a wonderful Fall! ■■■

Eye Level

NEWS & VIEWS FROM
WILLS EYE HOSPITAL
FALL 2022
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On the Cover (Clockwise, from top left): Lauren E. Hock, MD; Jordan D. Deaner, MD; Girard College students with Ralph C. Eagle Jr., MD; Sarah Michelson, MD; Wills Eye Ball honorees Mark H. Blecher, MD, and Robert S. Bailey Jr., MD, with Julia A. Haller, MD, and Douglas M. Wisner, MD; Jeffrey F. McMahon, MD.

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.

Accomplished, Award-Winning, Laser-Focused

Wills Eye Welcomes New Attendings

Jordan D. Deaner, MD

In early September, Jordan D. Deaner, MD, joined the Wills Eye Retina Service and Mid Atlantic Retina, where he'll rotate between offices in Bala Cynwyd, Bethlehem and East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, and Sewell, New Jersey. Two days a week, he'll be at Wills Eye Hospital where he will be teaching residents and fellows.

"I feel like things have come full circle," said Dr. Deaner, who attended Sidney Kimmel Medical College and completed his residency at Wills, serving as Co-Chief Resident in 2019. "Wills was the first place to recognize my potential as an ophthalmologist, a physician and a surgeon," he said. "Wills has always felt like home." Dr. Deaner plans to "pay it forward" by growing the uveitis and vitreoretinal surgery subspecialties and helping to co-create a uveitis fellowship.

Dr. Deaner, who grew up in the small town of Stoystown, Pennsylvania, completed fellowship training in uveitis at the Cole Eye Institute of the Cleveland Clinic and in vitreoretinal surgery at the Duke University Eye Center. In 2021, he received the Ronald G. Michels Fellowship Foundation Award. He is recognized as one of the preeminent vitreoretinal fellows in the nation.



"A lot of uveitis cases are formidable puzzles. I thrive on solving complex cases, putting the pieces together to unlock a challenging condition."

—Jordan D. Deaner, MD

"Vitreoretinal surgery (for example: the repair of retinal detachments and macular holes) is a more mature diagnostic field," explained Dr. Deaner. "We've come to a point where we are very good at making efficient diagnoses. Whereas with uveitis—the treatment of intraocular inflammation and infections—we have more room to grow."

"My passion is the diagnosis and management of intraocular infectious and inflammatory disease—medically, surgically, and through innovative research. A lot of uveitis cases are formidable puzzles. I thrive on solving complex cases, putting the pieces together to unlock a challenging condition. There's nothing quite like a good uveitis diagnostic win."

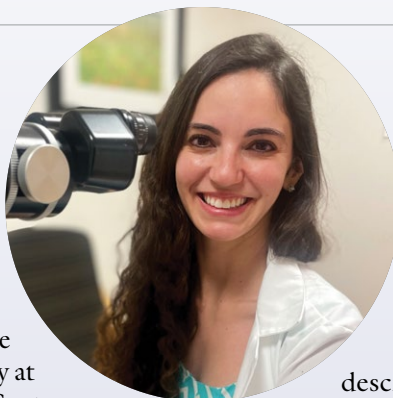
Sarah Michelson, MD

Sarah Michelson, MD, is elated to be named an attending physician at Wills Eye Hospital. Her appointment also represents a homecoming. A native of the Philadelphia region, Dr. Michelson obtained her undergraduate degree at Drexel University. She attended the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and completed an ophthalmology residency at the University of Michigan Kellogg Eye Center. She joined the faculty at Kellogg after graduation.

Over the past year, Dr. Michelson served as the Graduate Chief Resident. "In this position, I had a strong focus on education and residency administration," explained Dr. Michelson, a recipient of the Terry J. Bergstrom Faculty Teaching Award.

As a comprehensive ophthalmologist, Dr. Michelson is trained extensively in cataract surgery as well as routine and urgent eye care. In August, she joined Wills Eye Physicians – King of Prussia. She will also be staffing residents in the Cataract and Primary Eye Care (CPEC) clinic.

Dr. Michelson hopes to bring creative ideas to what she



"I really enjoy the mix of medicine and surgery, working with my hands, and restoring vision."

—Sarah Michelson, MD

described as an already impressive residency program at Wills Eye. She's particularly excited to work with residents in the William Maul Measey Ophthalmic Surgical Training (MOST) Lab.

Initially, Dr. Michelson thought she would pursue internal or emergency medicine. That path took a dramatic shift when she rotated through ophthalmology during medical school. "I found it incredibly fascinating," she recalled. "I really enjoy the mix of medicine and surgery, working with my hands, and restoring vision."

Dr. Michelson is looking forward to learning from new mentors. "Wills is a fantastic environment in which to work," she said. "There are so many high-powered, accomplished individuals in the field."

“As Wills Eye continues to innovate with groundbreaking research and cutting-edge treatments, we are incredibly optimistic that the best days for the field of ophthalmology are yet to come. Each one of these bright, dedicated physicians brings a unique set of skills and expertise. They represent the future and the next extraordinary chapter in Wills Eye care.”

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

Lauren E. Hock, MD

Lauren E. Hock, MD, is honored to be a new attending on the Glaucoma Service, following a one-year glaucoma fellowship at Wills Eye. “This is a dream opportunity,” said Dr. Hock. “Wills has a very strong tradition of training and teaching. One of the things I really enjoyed about the fellowship was the opportunity to work as a surgeon-clinician as well as an educator.”

Dr. Hock attended Rush Medical College and completed her ophthalmology residency at the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics. She is passionate about education and collaboration with her mentors clinically, as well as taking part in improving patient flow during the Service’s current renovation. Her goals include the development of new glaucoma treatment approaches and enhancing clinical and surgical skills training for Wills residents and glaucoma fellows.

During her residency, Dr. Hock was the Principal Investigator on an American Medical Association-funded project to teach medical trainees tools for responding to patient-initiated harassment. “The project initially focused on gender-based harassment but was expanded because of verbal harassment that my co-residents and I had experienced,” she said.



“I found that the interactions ophthalmologists had with patients were some of the most rewarding.”

—Lauren E. Hock, MD

A native of the Chicago suburbs, Dr. Hock enjoys the culture in Philadelphia. She is also fluent in Spanish. Prior to medical school, she spent a year in Ecuador teaching English as a Fulbright grantee.

Dr. Hock chose glaucoma as her specialty because of the ability to develop long-term relationships with patients and individually tailor surgical plans. “During medical training, I found that the interactions ophthalmologists had with patients were some of the most rewarding,” she said. “One of my mentors followed the same family for 30 years. In addition to glaucoma care, he had the opportunity to see them through life milestones.”

Currently, the Glaucoma Service has several clinical trials in place. “Many patients coming to Wills have already tried standard treatments,” said Dr. Hock. “Efforts are under way to improve surgical and medical interventions. Glaucoma is an exciting field to be in in 2022.”

Jeffrey F. McMahon, MD

Jeffrey F. McMahon, MD, always knew he wanted to work with his hands in some type of humanitarian cause. Although he has a natural talent for sketching and painting, medicine is where he found his calling.

Dr. McMahon attended Jefferson Medical College, completed his residency at Wills Eye Hospital and served as Co-Chief Resident during the 2017-2018 academic year. After several years as an Assistant Professor at New York’s Weill Cornell Medical College, he is thrilled to return to Philadelphia. “Wills is family in more ways than one,” said Dr. McMahon, who met his wife, Lea Moukarzel, MD, a gynecologic oncologist, while they were medical students. “It feels a lot like coming home.”

A comprehensive ophthalmologist with a specialty in cataract and refractive surgery, Dr. McMahon joins the practice of Wills Eye Physicians Bailey Weber Wisner in Plymouth Meeting. “One of the highlights of training at Wills was that I had the opportunity to work with such amazing mentors,” he said. “Now I’m lucky to be working with them as colleagues.”

The recipient of Weill Cornell’s Donald J. D’Amico Teaching Award, he’s passionate about education and the opportunity to introduce new techniques and improve curriculum. Dr. McMahon’s research has focused on expanding the use of simulators to better prepare residents



“One of the highlights of training at Wills was that I had the opportunity to work with such amazing mentors. Now, I’m lucky to be working with them as colleagues.”

—Jeffrey F. McMahon, MD

for surgeries. He’d also like to shed light on the evolving field of surgical psychology.

What led to a path in ophthalmology? As a medical student, he was shadowing a friend’s father during a cataract surgery. “It was one of those light bulb moments,” recalled Dr. McMahon. “It was a beautiful, elegant procedure and I knew that I would be very happy to pursue that path.” The thought that a 10-to-15-minute procedure can have such a dramatic impact on someone’s life continues to fuel Dr. McMahon.

“Cataracts are the leading, worldwide cause of reversible blindness,” he said. One highlight of Dr. McMahon’s residency was when he traveled to Kenya as part of the Wills Global Ophthalmology program. There they performed numerous cataract surgeries.

“I love what I do,” said Dr. McMahon. ■■■

Wills Eye Ball Honors CPEC Leaders

RAISES FUNDS FOR CPEC & RESIDENT EDUCATION

More than 300 guests enjoyed an evening of glitz and glamour at the Wills Eye Ball on June 25th at The Union League of Philadelphia. The first in-person gala since 2019 (due to the pandemic), the event celebrated the Cataract and Primary Eye Care (CPEC) Service and honored two of its long-time leaders and renowned surgeons Robert S. Bailey Jr., MD, and Mark H. Blecher, MD. Funds raised will benefit the CPEC Service and the Wills resident education program. ■■



▲ Robert S. Bailey Jr., MD, (third from right) and Mark H. Blecher, MD (fourth from right), are presented with Wills Eye Bowls. (With them, from left): Joseph P. Bilson, CEO; Janine G. Tabas, MD, Co-Director, CPEC; Christina McGowan, MD, Co-Director and Medical Director, CPEC; Julia A. Haller, MD, Ophthalmologist-in-Chief; Douglas M. Wisner, MD, Chief, CPEC.



▲ Emcee Stephanie Stahl, CBS3 and The CW Philly's Emmy award-winning health reporter.



▲ From left: Samir N. Patel, MD; Anthony Obeid, MD, MPH; Dilru Amarasekera, MD; Charles Brodowski, MD; Matthew Pieters, MD; Shaza Al-Holou, MD; Lindsay Machen, MD; Michael Abendroth, MD, MBA.



▲ From left: Board of Directors of City Trusts members Dominic A. Sabatini, Wills Eye Committee Chair; Bernard W. Smalley, Esq., President; Charles M. Gibbs, Esq.; Hon. Mark F. Squilla; Joseph P. Bilson, Wills CEO.

George L. Spaeth, MD, Glaucoma Service Director Emeritus, Inducted into ASCRS Hall of Fame

In April 2022, George L. Spaeth, MD, was inducted into the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) Hall of Fame. He also received the annual *EnergEYES Award*, presented by the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) to the person that most energizes young, rising ophthalmologists. Well-deserved honors!!



George L. Spaeth, MD

Melanoma-Eye Plaque Program with Jefferson Reaches Milestone

The world-renowned Wills Eye plaque radiotherapy program that treats ocular melanoma, a rare form of cancer, has been in place for over 50 years and is the gold standard of care. The program's partnership with Jefferson, established in 2019, recently reached a 500-procedure milestone.

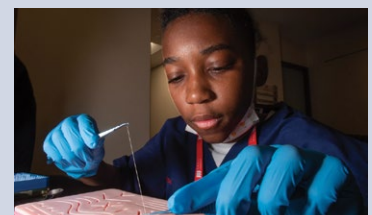
Congratulations to:

Ajay E. Kuriyan, MD, of the Retina Service and Mid Atlantic Retina, on receiving two highly competitive research grants: the Alcon Research Institute's Young Investor Award and the Macula Society's Mills and Margaret Cox Research Award.

Sonia Mehta, MD, and **Jason Hsu, MD**, of the Retina Service and Mid Atlantic Retina, on being named to the incoming class of the American Academy of Ophthalmology's (AAO) Leadership Development Program.

Natasha Nayak Kolomeyer, MD, of the Glaucoma Service, who was selected as an emerging leader in the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) Women's Leadership Development Program.

Planting Seeds for the Future



On the evening of April 25, Wills Eye physicians introduced the 7th-grade class from Philadelphia's Girard College to the field of ophthalmology. The program builds on the Fall 2022 *Planting Seeds* outreach initiative held at the hospital. After listening to the career journeys of Julia A. Haller, MD, and Leslie Brown, MD, students donned personalized scrubs and proceeded to the William Maul Measey Ophthalmic Surgical Training (MOST) Lab. Hands-on activities included suturing artificial skin, performing ultrasonography and slit lamp exams, and inserting artificial lenses in training eyes to simulate cataract surgery.

A new pathology rotation was introduced by renowned ocular pathologist Ralph C. Eagle Jr., MD. He taught eye anatomy and microscopy and worked with the students to diagnose tumors and eye cancers.

Wills Eye hopes to see many of these young people as future colleagues.

THOMAS BROWN II FEELS TRULY BLESSED

CATARACT SURGERY HAS GIVEN HIM A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

Several years ago, while driving at night, Thomas Brown II noticed that his vision seemed blurry. “I started to wipe my eyes,” recalled Thomas, 53, a lifelong musician and organist for a church in Philadelphia for the past 30 years. When he couldn’t see his sheet music or the choir director, he knew he had to get his eyes checked.

Thomas and his wife, Charlotte, went to an optical shop where he hoped that an updated prescription would sharpen his vision. “They adjusted my prescription, but I was also instructed to have a retina test,” remembered Thomas, who visited a health center for the exam. “There was bleeding behind my eyes, a sign of high blood pressure and diabetes. There were also cataracts.” Thomas was directed to Wills Eye Hospital.

In September 2021, when he visited cataract surgeon Robert S. Bailey Jr., MD, he learned that the bleeding was called diabetic retinopathy. “Diabetics often develop cataracts at an earlier age than other people,” explained Dr. Bailey. “Before I could perform surgery, Thomas needed to be assessed by a retinal specialist to determine if he needed treatment for the diabetic retinopathy.”

Admittedly, Thomas was nervous about the prospect of surgery. He was also determined to change his diet following a confirmed diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes. “I stopped drinking soda, cut out fatty foods, fried foods, sugary foods,” he said. “I changed everything. My blood sugar went from over 380 to the 130s.”

This past March, a very apprehensive Thomas went to Wills Eye to have the cataracts removed from his right eye, the first of two surgeries (he had the second procedure to his left eye several weeks later).

Thomas was put under conscious sedation with an intravenous (IV) drip. Dr. Bailey explained that this enables patients to be in a relaxed, yet conscious state.

Thomas recalled the moments just before surgery as the team of nurses and medical staff were prepping him.



Thomas Brown II, musician and church organist, at The Head Quarters Church in Philadelphia. (Right): With his wife, Charlotte.

“It’s like I have high beams. I can even read my Bible without glasses.”

— Thomas Brown II

“Everyone was so nice and friendly,” he said. “I was talking with them about New Orleans where I grew up: the seafood, red beans and rice, Mardi Gras. They made me feel so comfortable.”

As Thomas was lying on the gurney, Dr. Bailey approached him, and they started talking. “I wasn’t expecting that,” remembered Thomas. “He was telling me—step by step—what he was doing. He was putting numbing drops in my eyes and kept talking to me while I was wheeled into surgery. When he said ‘Tom, I took your cataract out,’ I couldn’t believe it.

“Dr. Bailey is awesome, his pleasant demeanor, bedside manner. And he has a lovely staff.”

Just one day after surgery, Thomas’ vision was clearer than he ever expected: “I looked at my wife and said, ‘Oh wow, honey, you’re so beautiful.’ It’s like I have high beams. I can even read my Bible without glasses.”

The surgeries have proven so life changing that Thomas is spreading the word to church members. “A lot of people are suffering and don’t realize that diabetes and cataracts can impact vision,” he said. ■■■

CONGRATS TO OUR GRADS!

Wills Eye Residency Program at Jefferson Wills Eye Hospital Fellowships

On Friday, June 24, the Class of 2022 Graduation Ceremony took place at Wills Eye Hospital.

Wills Eye celebrates the eight residents and 29 fellows for their unparalleled contributions and achievements. We wish them well and a world of success as each of these accomplished physicians embarks on the next chapter of their careers. ■■■



Residents (Front row, from left): Marisa Schoen, MD; Dilru Amarasekera, MD; William Tasman, MD Outstanding Fellow awardee Connie M. Wu, MD; Rakhi Melvani, MD; Ollya Fromal, MD. (Back row, from left): Matthew Pieters, MD; Louis Cai, MD; Anand Gopal, MD. Not pictured: Vikram A. Shankar, MD, MPH.



Retina Fellows and Attending Physicians (From left): John W. Hinkle, MD; Samir N. Patel, MD; Rebecca Russ Soares, MD, MPH; Arunan Sivalingam, MD, Director of Retina Fellowship; Carl D. Regillo, MD, Chief of Retina Service; Julia A. Haller, MD, Ophthalmologist-in-Chief.

MARNIX HEERSINK, MD, TO GIVE JAEGER LECTURE

Wills alumnus Marnix E. Heersink, MD, will address *Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Lessons Learned* at the annual **Edward A. Jaeger, MD Endowed Lectureship** on Thursday, November 10.

A cataract and laser refractive surgeon, Dr. Heersink is co-founder of Eye Center South in Dothan, Alabama.

The **Jaeger Lectureship** is named for the late, longtime director of undergraduate medical education and features leading scholars in various ophthalmic subspecialties.

For more information, visit willseye.cloud-cme.com.



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WELCOME WILLS EYE RESIDENCY CLASS OF 2025



The following residents began training at Wills Eye in July 2022

KAITLYN BRETTIN, MD

Harvard Medical School

HANNAH GARRIGAN, MD, MPH

Sidney Kimmel Medical College

LEO HALL, MD

Wayne State University School
of Medicine

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Visit daysofgiving-willseye.org
from September 24 to October 13 to make your gift!