The new University of Tennessee Eye Institute will be located within 930 Madison Avenue building. This state-of-the-art facility is a major portion of a $40 million gift of buildings, land, and equipment from the Baptist Memorial Health Care Corporation to the University of Tennessee.

The 930 Madison building is an ideal location for the Eye Institute. Strategically located adjacent to existing major research and academic facilities, it was built to hospital standards as a clinical medical center; thus, it can be easily renovated to serve clinical, research, or administrative functions. Dr. Barrett Haik, Hamilton Professor and Chair of the UT Department of Ophthalmology, stated that the quality construction and size—225,000 square feet—of the building offers a tremendous advantage: "This building is an extraordinary gift from the Baptist Hospital Board and administrative leaders. It will move our timetable forward by two years and allow us to create a comprehensive clinical, research, and academic eye center that will serve as a major resource for Memphis, the State of Tennessee, and the entire Mid-South region."

Under Dr. Haik's leadership, the Department of Ophthalmology is well on its way to securing private funds for renovation and refurbishing of the building. The UT Vision Science Program recently received a unique laboratory construction grant from the National Institutes of Health. The $1.9 million awarded to Principal Investigator and Assistant UT Vice President for Research Michael Dockter, Ph.D., required local matching funds. The matching funds were generously donated by Dr. and Mrs. Ralph S. Hamilton, major benefactors of all Departmental activities, and by the Knapp Foundation of Memphis, which has been a leading supporter of the Eye Institute campaign. Phase I of construction includes the development of 24,000 square feet of state-of-the-art research facilities. Philanthropic support to create and sustain this center of ophthalmic excellence has also been received from regional and national foundations, and individuals committed to the preservation of vision.

Stephen C. Reynolds, President and CEO of the Baptist Memorial Health Care Corporation, expressed the approval of their board and senior leadership: "We are blessed to have Dr. Haik and his colleagues in our community as we seek innovative approaches to advance ophthalmic care."

In addition, Baptist MHCC is donating its former campus of the Baptist Memorial Hospital Medical Center to the Memphis Biotech Foundation as the construction site of the new UT-Baptist Research Park. The plans call for a new campus integrating research, teaching, and biomedical development. The proximity of the Research Park to the UT Health Science Center will create unique collaborative opportunities for UTHSC and its academic and research activities, a major focus of the new Eye Institute.
Spencer P. Thornton, M.D., F.A.C.S. presented the inaugural Sir Harold Ridley Distinguished Visiting Professor lecture on September 28, 2001. Dr. Thornton earned his M.D. from the Bowman Gray School of Medicine of Wake Forest University and completed his residency in ophthalmology at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American College of Surgeons, and the American College of Nutritional Medicine. He has served as a member of the Board of Directors of the American College of Eye Surgeons and vice president of the International Refractive Surgery Club. He was chairman of the Internal Committee of Standards and Quality Control for Ophthalmic Instruments and Devices and served as president of the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery. He is the current president of the American College of Nutritional Medicine and retired director of the Thornton Eye Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

Jerre Minor Freeman, M.D. established the Distinguished Visiting Professorship in honor of Sir Harold Ridley, inventor of the intraocular lens, to recognize, commemorate, and encourage innovative analysis and solutions to ophthalmic dilemmas. Dr. Thornton’s lecture, entitled “Accepting the Challenge of Innovation in Medicine,” addressed the strength of conviction needed by those who seek to introduce new ideas, technology, and techniques to ophthalmic treatment, citing examples of ophthalmic discoveries that achieved acceptance through the resolute efforts of their advocates.

Dr. Freeman, an eminent local ophthalmologist and graduate of the University of Tennessee Ophthalmology Residency Program, endowed the Professorship. Dr. Freeman is currently a Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, and has been in private practice in Memphis for over 30 years, specializing in cataract surgery, microsurgery of the anterior segment of the eye, intraocular lens implants, and laser refractive surgery. He is founder and chairman of the Memphis Eye and Cataract Associates’ Outpatient Surgical Center, the first center of its kind in Tennessee. He is also one of the founders of the World Cataract Foundation—an international, charitable nonprofit organization founded in 1978 in response to the vast problems of cataract blindness in the developing countries of the world.

Dr. Freeman’s humanitarian activities are outstanding and have garnered the respect and admiration of his many professional colleagues. He has been a volunteer ophthalmologist at the Hospital de la continued on next page
Dr. Rajesh Kumar Sharma is the Gerwin Research Scholar in Ophthalmology. Dr. Sharma received his medical degree from the Armed Forces Medical College of the University of Poona in India. His residency in ophthalmology at the Medical College of the University of Gorakhpur and the Medical College of Meerut University led to a diploma in ophthalmology and a Master of Surgery respectively. At the University of Lund, Sweden, he was awarded his Licentiate of Medical Science and Ph.D. He began post-doctoral studies at the University Hospital of Lund, researching neurobiology of the retina and retinal transplants, and he continued his research at the Institute of Eye Pathology at the University of Copenhagen, concentrating on the culture and transplantation of the retinal pigment epithelium.

Dr. Sharma completed his postdoctoral studies at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in 1999 and was appointed an Instructor in Ophthalmology. At that time, he was also selected as the Gerwin Scholar in recognition of his past achievements and his promising potential as an innovative researcher. Dr. Sharma’s research centers on cultivating retinal cells for transplantation. This technique holds great application for the alleviation of retinal degenerative diseases, most particularly macular degeneration. He has lectured extensively on both clinical and research topics in ophthalmology at universities in India and Sweden, and has spoken at many international symposia and conferences. He has authored over twenty-five original papers, reviews, and book chapters on retinal degenerations and retinal transplantation.

The Daniel and Dorothy Gerwin Research Endowment was established by Mrs. Dorothy Gerwin in honor of her late husband. The Gerwins have made a significant impact on the research programs at UT and in the Department of Ophthalmology specifically. Dr. Haik praised this gift: "Mrs. Gerwin’s support and ongoing encouragement of biomedical research has been critical to our efforts to prevent blindness."

Amistad in Ometepec, Mexico for over three decades, and a consultant professor in China at both the Shanghai Medical College and the Tong Ren Hospital in Beijing. In recognition of his volunteerism, he has been awarded the National Medal of Honor for Humanitarian Services presented by the Daughters of the American Revolution, the inaugural Person of Vision Award by the Alliance for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Global Citizens Award presented by the World Affairs Council of Memphis, the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award for Community Service presented by the Lions Club International Foundation, the Good Samaritan Award presented by the Memphis Health Care News and the Church Health Center, the Community Service Award presented by Tennessee Medical Association, Outstanding Alumnus presented by the University of Memphis, and the Distinguished Alumnus presented by the UT College of Medicine, Department of Ophthalmology, among many others.

“...Ridley Distinguished Professor,” continued from previous page
Dr. Edward Chaum published “Comparative Analysis of the Uptake and Expression of Plasmid Vectors in Human Ciliary and Retinal Pigment Epithelial Cells In Vitro” in the Journal of Cellular Biochemistry.

Dr. Barrett Haik was named a “Health Care Hero” by the Memphis Business Journal. Dr. Haik was recognized for his outstanding efforts in innovative patient care. Dr. Haik was also named “2001 Executive of the Year” by the Memphis Chapter of the International Association of Administrative Professionals.

Drs. Monica Jablonski and Alessandro Iannaccone were co-authors of “Targeted disruption of Müller cell metabolism induces photo-receptor dysmorphogenesis” in the journal Glia and “Pigment epithelium-derived factor supports normal development of photoreceptor neurons and opsin expression after RPE removal” in the Journal of Neuroscience, with co-authors Drs. Tombran-Tink and Mrazek and “Downregulation of a Unique Photoreceptor Protein Correlates with Improper Outer Segment Assembly” with Drs. Wohabrebbi, Umostot, and Desiderio in the Journal of Neuroscience Research.


She also co-authored “Photoreceptor-Horizontal Cell Reaggregation in Monolayer Cultures of Neonatal Rabbit Retina” in the Journal of Comparative Neurology, with Kate Withrow.

Dr. Natalie Kerr co-authored a chapter entitled: “Selected Genetic Syndromes with Ophthalmic Manifestations” in Pediatric Ophthalmology, co-edited by Drs. Kenneth Wright and Peter Spiegel.

Dr. James Linder presented “Eyelid Tumors and Eyelid Reconstruction” at the UT Department of Dermatology Grand Rounds.

Dr. Monika Malecha presented “Herpes Simplex Ocucutaneous Disease” at UT Dermatology Grand Rounds in September.


Dr. Peter Netland was senior author of a study comparing the efficacy of glaucoma medications, “Travoprost compared with latanoprost and timolol in patient with open-angle glaucoma or ocular hypertension,” published in the October issue of the American Journal of Ophthalmology. Dr. Netland was an invited speaker at the Four State Ophthalmological Society Meeting on September 15, 2001, in Missouri, and presented a “Glaucoma Update” to the Tennessee Ophthalmological Society in Chattanooga on September 21, 2001. Dr. Netland was also the invited speaker at the Vermont Ophthalmological Society Meeting in Rutland, presenting “Management of Difficult Glaucomas,” “Treatment of Problem Blebs,” and “Non-IOP Lowering Strategies in the Medical Management of Glaucoma.”

Drs. R. Christopher Walton and Natalie Kerr were co-authors of “Juvenile Arthritis and Autoimmunity to Type II Collagen” in Arthritis and Rheumatism, along with Drs. Myers, Higgins, Finkel, Reed, Thompson, Hendrickson, Pandya-Lipman, Shlopol, Stastny, Postlewaite, and Kang.
Dr. Howard Jernigan’s research over the past 23 years has been directed at finding methods to prevent cataracts by understanding and reinforcing natural tissue repair processes.

In the U.S. alone, there are more than 1 million cataract surgeries that cost billions of dollars per year. Worldwide, cataracts are the leading cause of blindness. Cataracts affect people of all ages, but most kinds are more common in older people, so the problems associated with cataracts are intensifying as people live longer.

In general, aging of any tissues, including the lens, is a struggle between damage and repair. Sources of lens damage have been identified—such as ultraviolet light, x-rays, and certain drugs—but many sources of damage cannot be completely avoided. We are constantly exposed to visible light and oxygen or certain pharmaceuticals that may be required to treat medical conditions, even though they may contribute to cataracts. Since we cannot completely avoid constant low-level damage to our lenses, it is necessary to depend upon our natural repair mechanisms to prevent damage from accumulating.

Very early in the development of cataracts, the membranes that surround lens cells become leaky and lose function. Dr. Jernigan’s laboratory is studying the processes that repair these cell membranes, made up primarily of phospholipids and proteins. After cell membrane damage begins to occur, the lens cells start to make more of the phospholipid compounds needed for membrane repair, and Dr. Jernigan’s research seeks to identify the control factors for this repair, to hasten the process with drugs or diet.

Aiding him in his investigations are two new research assistants, Dr. Wenrong Hu and Dr. Ipsit Chakrabarti. Dr. Hu received her medical degree from Hering Medical University in Hangzhou, China, and also completed a residency in otorhinolaryngology at the Second Municipal Hospital of Hangzhou. She was a research assistant in the laboratory of Professor Renrui Ding at Hangzhou University and a research associate at the Institute of Viral Diseases at the Zhejiang Academy of Medical Sciences. Dr. Chakrabarti received a Master of Science in Zoology, a Master of Philosophy in Environmental Science, and a Ph.D. from Calcutta University. His major research interest has been biochemistry and enzymology. Enzymology is a fascinating field that includes the assay and characterization of different metabolic enzymes, an important aspect of cataract analysis. Both these researchers bring unique skills and experience to addressing the problem of inhibiting cataractous lens changes.

Dr. Jernigan and his team will undoubtedly contribute to the knowledge that will one day delay or prevent the cataracts that cause so much expense, suffering, and blindness throughout the world—and in the Department of Ophthalmology specifically—by direct financial support and ongoing encouragement of biomedical research.
Barrett G. Haik, M.D., F.A.C.S.
Ophthalmic oncology, orbital disease, and oculoplastic surgery
Chair and Hamilton Professor

Richard D. Drewry, Jr., M.D., F.A.C.S.
Neuro-ophthalmology
Professor and Vice-Chair

Edward Chaum, M.D., Ph.D.
Medical and surgical retina
Associate Professor and Plough Foundation Professor of Retinal Diseases

James C. Fleming, M.D., F.A.C.S.
Orbital disease and oculoplastic surgery
Associate Professor

Ralph S. Hamilton, M.D.
Anterior segment surgery
Professor

Roger L. Hiatt, M.D.
Pediatric ophthalmology and strabismus
Professor Emeritus

Alessandro Iannaccone, M.D.
Hereditary retinal disease and visual electrophysiology
Assistant Professor

Natalie C. Kerr, M.D., F.A.C.S.
Pediatric ophthalmology and strabismus
Associate Professor

James S. Linder, M.D.
Orbital disease and oculoplastic surgery
Assistant Professor

Monika A. Malecha, M.D.
Corneal and anterior segment disease; refractive surgery
Assistant Professor

William R. Morris, M.D.
Comprehensive ophthalmology and ophthalmic pathology
Associate Professor

Peter A. Netland, M.D., Ph.D.
Glucoma
Associate Professor

Mary E. Smith, M.P.H., R.D.M.S.
Diagnostic ultrasonography
Instructor

R. Christopher Walton, M.D.
Uveitis and ocular inflammatory disease
Associate Professor

Matthew W. Wilson, M.D.
Ophthalmic oncology, orbital disease, and oculoplastic surgery
Assistant Professor

Dianna A. Johnson, Ph.D.
Hiatt Professor of Ophthalmology and Professor of Neuroanatomy

Howard M. Jernigan, Ph.D.
Professor of Ophthalmology and Biochemistry

Monica A. Jablonski, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Ophthalmology and Neuroanatomy

Rajesh Sharma, M.D., Ph.D.
Instructor in Ophthalmology and Gerwin Research Scholar

UTMG Ophthalmology Clinical Facilities
Medical Center
920 Madison Avenue - Suite 915
Memphis, TN 38103
Tel: (901) 448-6650
Fax: (901) 448-1333

Germantown
7645 Wolf River Blvd. - Suite 240
Memphis, TN 38138
Tel: (901) 347-8240
Fax: (901) 347-8245

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E07-0177-02-001-?? (????)
Dr. Alessandro Iannaccone has received a grant from the National Eye Institute to investigate the role of a dietary supplement, lutein, in preventing age-related macular degeneration. The grant, a K23 Award, is for $711,006 over a five-year period. "Clinical Epidemiology of Retinal Degenerations" will focus on examining patients 70 years old or older to understand the relationship between lutein and the risk of age-related macular degeneration. The study hopes to clarify whether lutein has a protective effect and to determine the levels of lutein necessary to achieve this protection. The participants will be selected from the Health ABC Study, a large prospective study of aging in Memphis and Pittsburgh, funded by the National Institute on Aging. The principal investigator of Health ABC is Stephen B. Kritchevsky, Ph.D., epidemiologist with the UTHSC Department of Preventive Medicine, who is also co-investigator on the NEI funded ancillary study. Of 1,300 patients in the ABC Study, approximately 350 will participate in the eye program.

The study will utilize a unique technique called "macular pigment optical densitometry" (MPOD). This technique estimates the content of lutein in the macula of patients in a non-invasive, simple, reliable way. Bausch & Lomb and Kemin Foods have contributed funds to support a custom-made unit to estimate the intraretinal content in lutein.

This NEI grant is one of several recently awarded to Dr. Iannaccone. He has also received a grant from the UTHSC Vascular Biology Program to study vascular aspects of age-related macular degeneration; three grants (one from UTMG, one from Fight for Sight, and another multi-year grant as a subcontract to a multi-center study funded by NIH) to study Usher syndrome, the most common deaf-blindling disorder in the population; and finally, a grant from LeBonheur Children’s Medical Center to study X-linked retinal diseases.

How to Help UT Ophthalmology Achieve Its Goals

Without the continuing generosity of the alumni and friends of the Department, it would be impossible for us to complete our current educational and research objectives or undertake additional projects. You can help by contributing to existing funding initiatives, by underwriting a project of particular interest to you or your family, or by lending unrestricted support with a gift to the Ophthalmology Support Fund.

For additional information on charitable donations to the Department of Ophthalmology at UT Health Science Center in Memphis, please contact Bettye Speake CFRE, Director of Development for the College of Medicine, 62 South Dunlap, Suite 500, Memphis, TN, 38163, telephone 901-448-6532 or 1-800-733-0482, or you may call our Department offices at 901-448-5883.
Dr. Natalie Kerr Named New Director of Residency Program

Natalie C. Kerr, M.D., F.A.C.S. recently became the new director of the Ophthalmology Residency Program. Dr. Kerr succeeds Dr. R. Christopher Walton, who was residency director for five years.

The residency director supervises all aspects of resident training, including interview and selection of candidates, clinical and surgical rotations, and teaching activities such as lectures and conferences. The director is responsible for fulfilling the requirements of the Residency Review Committee (RRC), which oversees and assures training in medical specialties.

Dr. Walton was appointed director in 1996, and met a major challenge in reorganizing the program so residents rotated with the faculty recruited by Dr. Barrett Haik. He also reorganized and re-equipped the clinic at the Veterans’ Affairs Medical Center, the largest of the resident clinics. The VA eye clinic is now a premier training center, offering the most recent advances in diagnostic and surgical equipment. It is hosting a pilot program in electronic medical record-keeping and introducing residents to state-of-the-art information retrieval.

Dr. Kerr’s greatest task in assuming the position of residency director is insuring educational quality during an environmental change. “The Eye Institute will offer incredible potential for increased interaction between the residents and the faculty. My goal is to optimize exposure of the residents to the faculty in all facets of ophthalmic activity: clinical diagnosis and management, surgery, and research.”

Additionally, Dr. Iannaconne co-authored two important papers on genetics: "Positional cloning of a novel gene on chromosome 16q causing Bardet-Biedl syndrome (BBS2)” in Human Molecular Genetics with Drs. Nishimura, Searby, Carmi, Elbedour, Van Maldergem, Fulton, Lam, Powell, Swiderski, Bugge, Haider, Kwitek-Black, Ying, Duhl, Gorman, Heon, Jacobson, Stone, and Sheffield and "Identification of the gene that, when mutated, causes the human obesity syndrome BBS4” in Nature Genetics with Drs. Mykytyn, Braun, Carmi, Haider, Searby, Shastr, Beck, Wright, Elbedour, Riise, Baldi, Raas-Rothschild, Gorman, Duhl, Jacobson, Casavant, Stone, and Sheffield.

...Study of Retinal Degeneration,” continued from previous page