

# UMASS INSIGHT



UMASS MEMORIAL  
EYE CENTER

*News from the Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences*

Winter 2019

## INSIGHT FROM CHANCELLOR MICHAEL F. COLLINS, MD

At this time of year when family and gratitude are foremost in our minds and in our holiday celebrations, I humbly urge you to take a moment to reflect on the unique qualities of physician/patient relationships. Our patients come to us seeking good health, comfort and expertise. Yet, I posit that it is the very patients for whom we have the privilege to care who give far more to those of us who have chosen to pursue a career in the health sciences.

The very nature of our professions allows us to live in service to others; to accompany people at some of the most consequential moments in their lives; to witness highs and lows; to listen to their fears and secrets. Patients with whom we interact serve as a source of immense motivation for caregivers and biomedical researchers alike; the challenges patients face further invest us in the virtuous cycle of identifying problems that must be solved, seeking answers through research and, in caring for our patients, applying new discoveries for the benefit of individuals and communities far and wide. Indeed, this mission is at the heart of all that is UMass Medical School.

I am most appreciative of our colleagues in the Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences for their daily commitment to continuous improvement on behalf of their patients. As we look ahead to 2019, I hope that you will join me in reflecting on the fulfilling nature of our professions and the gift of serving our patients.

**Michael F. Collins, MD**

*Chancellor, UMass Medical School and Senior Vice President for Health Sciences, University of Massachusetts*



## INSIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

### CLINICAL

Putting Eye Service on the Map in 2018

### STUDENT

Samuel Leeman

### FACULTY

Justine Grier, OD  
Dan Yoon, MD

### COMMUNITY

Cancer Walk - Eye Team  
Walks for a Cure

### RESEARCH

Johanna M. Seddon, MD,  
ScM

### STAFF

Themia Pappas-Fillmore

Find us online for the latest, research, publications, faculty updates & more at [www.umassmed.edu/ophthalmology](http://www.umassmed.edu/ophthalmology).

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Medical Center**

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## FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I am pleased to invite you to read the 2019 winter edition of UMass Insight. At this special time of the year, we are delighted to share with you the incredible progress that the eye team has made in 2018, in the clinic, in research, in teaching, and in our community. In the clinic numerous innovative ideas were implemented, including our open access clinic, that allows patients to walk in and be seen same day. As a result of allowing high access, our patient volume doubled, and our surgical volume quadrupled. 2018 was an exciting year, as several new services became available to our patients, including the oculoplastics clinic, contact lens service, and pediatric ophthalmology service. In 2018, we expanded to include three different locations: the Eye Center at UMass Memorial Medical Center—Hahnemann Campus, the Eye Center at the Ambulatory Care Center (ACC) on the Medical Center's University Campus, and the Eye Center at Northborough Crossing. In every one of these eye clinic locations, we offer both scheduled appointments and a walk-in open access clinic. As a result, our patient satisfaction soared to 96 percent in 2018. Dr. Gabriel Luna, our ambulatory physician leader (APL), was instrumental in making sure the Eye Center provided excellent quality of care to our patients in all clinic locations. This winter, we proudly celebrate being included (second year in a row) in the "Sweet 16" finalists, as one of the best teams to apply the idea board system at UMass Memorial Health Care. In research, we established the Macular Degeneration Center of Excellence, headed by a world-



renowned clinician-scientist, Dr. Johanna Seddon. Pursuing our educational mission we have successfully submitted a new Ophthalmology Residency Program application. This enormous effort was headed by our residency director, Dr. Misha Faustina, and involved all our faculty members, clinicians, and researchers. The eye team continues to be involved in community activities to promote eye health. Our providers and staff have been engaged in giving talks in community centers, and in contributing to local health-focused events such as the UMass Cancer Walk, and the Multicultural Women's Health

Summit. I am incredibly proud of all our faculty and staff who are working hard every day to achieve these spectacular positive changes. I would like to thank all of you for your support of the Eye Center. Wishing you happy holidays and a terrific new year.

**Shlomit Schaal, MD, PhD**  
*Professor and Department Chair*

### NEW YEAR, NEW LOOK!

Notice something different about our winter newsletter? As 2018 comes to a close, we thought it was the perfect time to give it a fresh, clean new look! By opening up some space to give our articles some breathing room, we hope it will allow readers a better experience as they learn about all of the exciting work happening at the UMass Memorial Eye Center. We hope you like what we've done and look forward to sharing more Eye Center news with you in 2019!





## CLINICAL INSIGHT

### PUTTING EYE SERVICES ON THE MAP IN 2018

Web pages, postcards, media coverage, and more – we are leaving no stone unturned as we inform local consumers about the growing services available at the UMass Memorial Eye Center. Following the Eye Center's rapid transformation in 2017, which resulted in better patient flow and open access at their clinic on the Hahnemann Campus of UMass Memorial Medical Center, the Eye Center soon doubled the size of their already stellar team with the addition of five new physicians.

In 2018, the team welcomed:

- two outstanding optometrists, both of whom provide pediatric care;
- a skilled ophthalmologist who specializes in the innovative practice of minimally invasive glaucoma surgery;
- a world-renowned ophthalmologist who is widely lauded for her work in macular degeneration; and
- a highly regarded pediatric ophthalmologist who visits twice a month from Boston Children's Hospital.

The group also opened two new locations: the Ambulatory Care Center on the University Campus and UMass Memorial Medical Group at Northborough Crossing.

With all of that new-found access, the Marketing and Communications and Physician Relation Services (PRS) departments had some work to do. The story goes, "If you build it, they will come." And while that may be the case, the truth of the matter is that they'll only come if you tell them about it. So tell them, we did!

### LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

First things first, loads of collateral materials were created to help spread the word of our services and new locations. Signs, info sheets, profile cards, door



Special thanks are extended to two former members of the Marketing and Communications Department for their leadership and significant contributions to our marketing efforts: **Peggy Thrappas**, former senior director of marketing, and **Kate Wood**, former marketing account manager.

decals – you name it, we created it! To make it easier for referring physicians to send their patients to us, the PRS team was armed with easy-to-use referral pads for each location, which they left behind after visits to dozens of referring physician offices where they introduced the eye team and their services.

### SPREADING THE WORD

In June, a six-month, multi-channel marketing campaign was launched with the goal of increasing awareness of our ophthalmology services and boosting volume. Utilizing direct mail, email, and paid search channels, we were able to communicate with prospective patients about the superior care provided at the Eye Center. The campaign directed consumers to a web landing page where visitors had the opportunity to learn more about our team, our services, and request an appointment. Results of the

*continued to page 4*

# UMASS INSIGHT

*News from the Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences*

## CLINICAL INSIGHT *continued from page 3*

campaign are expected very soon, and we can't wait to share them with all of you when they're received.

In addition to the campaign, we tapped into a number of different channels to showcase our physicians and highlight the great work they're all doing. From educational [videos](#) and screensavers to Facebook Live promotions and outstanding media coverage of [Schlomit Schaal, MD, PhD](#), chair, Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences, and pediatric ophthalmologist [Suzanne Johnston, MPH, MD](#), the best-kept secret of UMass Memorial Eye Center isn't going to remain a secret for long!

### TAKING OUR SHOW ON THE ROAD

Throughout the year, our physicians took advantage of any opportunity to step in front of a crowd, beginning with a presence at the Multicultural Women's Health Summit, and continuing the effort by offering presentations on eye health at local senior centers, and teaching children and their parents about the importance of eye exams at the UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center Teddy Bear Clinic. The PRS team also organized a number of meet and greets with local physicians on behalf of the ophthalmology team.

In September, Dr. Schaal presented to primary care physicians (PCPs) at the Primary Care Pod meeting, where she detailed the steps her team took to turn around the clinic's access and welcomed PCPs to refer their patients to the center so they could experience the great care offered here for themselves.

### LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019

2018 was a busy year, indeed, and there are no signs of slowing down now as our capabilities continue to expand. With a terrific team in place, the future is clear for the Department of Ophthalmology and we welcome all of the great work that awaits us in 2019!

## STUDENT INSIGHT

### INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF A SCRIBE IN AN ACADEMIC OPHTHALMOLOGY CLINIC

Samuel Leeman joined the UMass Memorial Eye Center as a medical scribe at the start of summer 2018.



Sam studied economics and computer science at the University of Rochester, where he first had the opportunity to get involved in data science research within ophthalmology. Graduating in 2017, his keen interest in this area led him to find

Dr. Schlomit Schaal, chair of the UMass Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences, and he has been assisting in the department's research projects since mid 2017.

In an effort to continue the recent innovations at the UMass Memorial Eye Center, Sam has piloted a new scribing program in the department this year. He currently works in the eye clinic helping each of the physicians with the electronic medical record system and directing clinic flow. By completing these tasks, Sam takes away work from the physicians and allows them to focus more directly on their patients. With the help of Dr. Schaal and her colleagues, he is conducting a research study investigating the year-long impact of the scribe on the eye clinic. By analyzing changes in efficiency measures, such as physician productivity, patient wait times, and physician/patient satisfaction, he looks to demonstrate the effect of a scribe within academic ophthalmology. Sam intends to publish his work this coming summer.

## FACULTY INSIGHT

### JUSTINE GRIER, OD

Dr. Justine Grier joined the Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences in August 2018 as a primary care optometrist with special training in pediatric optometry. While she grew up in Maryland, Dr. Grier has been fortunate to study on both coasts, graduating cum laude from the Southern



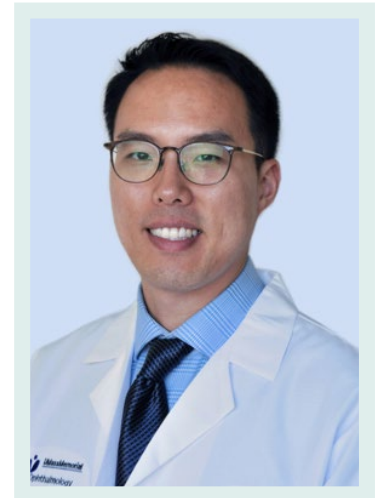
California College of Optometry, then completing a one-year pediatric residency in Boston. Through this program, she gained experience in pediatric eye care by co-managing patients at Tufts Medical Center, Boston Medical Center, and Perkins School for the Blind, among other sites.

Serving patients of all ages, Dr. Grier's clinical interests include care for individuals with disabilities, contact lens fittings in adults and children, as well as non-surgical management of binocular vision disorders. These include strabismus, amblyopia, accommodative anomalies, and difficulties with eye tracking. She hopes to begin a vision therapy service next year. Dr. Grier enjoys seeing patients at each of the three UMass Memorial Eye Center locations – the Hahnemann Campus, the ACC at University Campus, and at Northborough Crossing.

### DAN YOON, MD

Dr. Dan Yoon is our newest anterior segment surgeon. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Swarthmore College with a BA in Biology, and obtained his MD from New York University School of Medicine. Dr. Yoon completed his medicine internship at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City where he was elected as the prelim intern of the year. He also completed his residency at University of Illinois at Chicago and Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary.

His clinical interests include cataract surgery and minimally invasive glaucoma surgery. His research interests include novel glaucoma treatments and diagnostics, gene therapy, and medical device innovation. He previously served as an advisor at University of Illinois at Chicago Innovation Center and as a consultant to an ophthalmic medical device startup.



### EYE TEAM CELEBRATES TECH APPRECIATION WEEK - NOVEMBER 5-9, 2018

The week was filled with celebrations that included lunches and goodies Monday through Friday, as well as an ice cream sundae all-you-could-eat feast. We celebrated and gave thanks for all the hard work that the technicians do all year long. It was a highly caloric event, but our techs will put that energy into doing great things for our department and for our patients. Thank you to the greatest ophthalmic techs in the industry. We couldn't do it without you and we're lucky to have you on our team.



## COMMUNITY INSIGHT

### CANCER WALK - EYE TEAM WALKS FOR A CURE

October 1, 2018, the eye team participated in the UMass Cancer Walk. The team members walked together five miles to honor cancer survivors, to support cancer research endeavors at UMass Medical School, and to celebrate the lives of loved ones who had suffered from the disease.



The Eye Center T-Shirt was designed by Katlyn Champagne, with heavy input from techs Jessica Peterson and Sherri Granger. We wanted to incorporate something we use in the eye clinic every day - the Snellen chart, used to test visual acuity.



## RESEARCH INSIGHT

### WORLD RENOWNED CLINICIAN-SCIENTIST JOINS THE EYE CENTER

Johanna M. Seddon, MD, ScM, joined the Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences at UMass Medical School as professor of ophthalmology, director of retina, and founding director of the Macular Degeneration Center of Excellence.

Dr. Seddon is a world-renowned retina specialist and genetic epidemiologist. Dr. Seddon specializes in the evaluation and treatment of patients with retinal dystrophies and degenerations, including macular degeneration, Stargardt Disease, Best Disease, high myopia as well as other macular disorders. She also specializes in assessing individuals with a family history of these disorders.

Dr. Seddon pioneered the studies of the etiology and prevention of macular degeneration and she is recognized worldwide for her groundbreaking research on lifestyle factors (smoking, body mass index, abdominal adiposity, exercise), nutrition (dietary lutein, zeaxanthin, omega-3 fatty acids), and the associations of these modifiable factors with retinal disease. The advice to eat green, leafy vegetables, increase lutein and zeaxanthin intake, and adhere to healthy habits like not smoking and getting exercise, all stem from her early work, which has changed the management of macular degeneration world wide.

Dr. Seddon and her research team have also made novel discoveries regarding genetic, biologic, and genetic-environmental biomarkers associated with both onset and progression of macular degeneration. Breakthroughs in the Seddon Laboratory include the discovery of several of the known genes associated with macular degeneration, including the discovery of the first genetic variants in the HDL pathway, VEGF pathway, collagen extracellular matrix pathway, and the first rare genetic variants in the complement pathway with high impact on the disease. These variants can lead to high risk of disease in families and are now targets for new treatments that are currently being developed.



**Johanna M. Seddon, MD, ScM,**  
Professor of Ophthalmology,  
Director of Retina and  
Founding Director of the  
Macular Degeneration Center  
of Excellence

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## STAFF INSIGHT

### THEMIA PAPPAS-FILLMORE

Themia Pappas-Fillmore is the coordinator of publications and design and is part of the Surgical Administrative Service Group, which supports the Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences. Work for the department consists of creating and designing the department's: eye icon, seminar publications, invitations, posters, displays, digital signage, and layout of the UMass Insight newsletter.



UMASS MEMORIAL  
EYE CENTER



Themia graduated with a degree in art from the University of Lowell (now UMass Lowell), and in 1983, started working for the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in the Department of Biomedical Media. Biomedical media services included: biomedical photography, medical illustration, and graphic design. She started as the graphic designer and was promoted to art services manager. At that time designs and layouts were created traditionally on a pad of paper and by cutting and pasting. Now, with today's technology, we are able to do so much more and, in less time.

Recently she was recognized for 35 years of service at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. She says after working so many years, she still gets excited when new projects and learning opportunities come her way.

*Warmest Wishes for  
Happy Holidays  
and a  
Great New Year!*



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