



FALL 2019

CONTRIBUTOR REPORT

National Alliance For Eye And Vision Research | Alliance For Eye and Vision Research

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Importance of NAEVR/AEVR

NAEVR/AEVR and its Executive Director James Jorkasky are key contributors to our efforts to fund vision research. Participating in two recent events in Washington DC made it clear how critical our community's involvement in educating our country's leaders about the importance and exciting advances in vision research are for our ability to continue to do groundbreaking research. At both the September 5 National Institutes of Health (NIH) campus farewell event held for retiring National Eye Institute (NEI) Director Paul Sieving, MD, PhD, and the September 18-19 *Fifth Annual Emerging Vision Scientists (EVS) Day*, which is described in detail within this Report, the achievements and future potential of colleagues across our field were highlighted.

At the NIH event, on behalf of NAEVR/AEVR, we were delighted to have the opportunity to present to Dr. Sieving an Alliances' plaque that read, "In appreciation for his leadership of the NEI and his commitment to the vision health of all Americans." Several leaders in both vision research and the NIH highlighted the many ways in which vision researchers have pioneered advances in

are as we all work together on advocacy and education for vision research (more about that later!).

The EVS program is one of the most significant activities for our vision research community, and this year was a particularly strong showing. Starting with the outstanding presentation by NEI intramural researcher Kapil Bharti, PhD, about NEI's first-in-human clinical trials for an induced pluripotent stem cell therapy for dry Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) at the *International AMD Awareness Week* Congressional Briefing, the entire program was impactful in both science and engagement of our government leaders. The AEVR Congressional Poster Reception and NAEVR Advocacy Day provided our scientists with a tremendous opportunity to interact with Members of Congress and their staffs. Having heard directly from past Kellogg participants about the value of prior EVS events, the experiences gave all of us an invaluable opportunity to showcase the importance of continued robust funding for the NIH and NEI, especially to support the next generation of vision scientists.

Our Alliances Boards and Jim are fully committed

"Our Alliance Boards ... are fully committed to maximizing opportunities for active member participation."

medical research. As you know, although Paul retired from the NIH, he is still fully committed to vision research through his leadership of a new Center for Ocular Regenerative Therapy at the University of California at Davis.

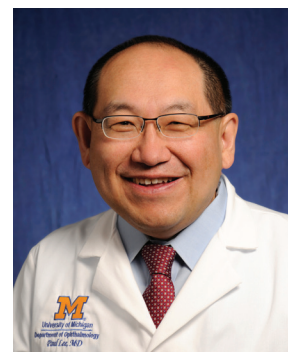
Acting NEI Director Santa Tumminia, PhD has met with Jim and ARVO Executive Director Iris Rush—who also serves as a NAEVR/AEVR Director—regarding ways to partner in communicating about the importance of good vision next year, a very apt 2020. At the October 4 National Advisory Eye Council (NAEC) meeting, Dr. Tumminia continued that spirit of partnership by announcing numerous staff changes and new initiatives that are driving the Institute forward, especially encouraging vision community input on the latter when they are announced. Among the staff changes announced was that Mary Frances Cotch, PhD had been named NEI's Acting Deputy Director. An epidemiologist by training, Dr. Cotch will be critical to NEI's announced expanded activities in vision public health issues.

As part of NAEVR/AEVR's expanded commitment to engaging broadly with our community, Jim organized a dinner meeting of nearly a dozen Alliances member organizations with a Washington presence to share insights and experiences on advocating for vision research. As the new Board President, I was pleased to see the easy rapport among the attendees, which is a reminder about how important face-to-face interactions

to maximizing opportunities for active member participation, since being engaged first-hand is the best way to see the value of the Alliances' efforts. In addition to Jim's excellent update emails and this quarterly Report, as well as the recently launched redesigned Web site, the Boards and I want to engage members through upcoming quarterly Webcasts and a new Annual Town Hall so that there is an opportunity for two-way interaction. The Board has also created a Working Group to investigate Councils for sectors of the membership, such as Professional Societies, to ensure that the Alliances meet directly with the clinicians and researchers who directly benefit from the NIH/NEI-funded discoveries facilitated by NAEVR's advocacy for increased funding for the NEI and special NIH initiatives, such as the BRAIN and Regenerative Medicine Initiatives.

Shortly, the Alliances will be issuing the 2020 renewal campaign, and I urge you to support NAEVR and AEVR during this next year of challenges for both the unfinished Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 and upcoming FY2021 appropriations processes. As always, if you have any comments, please feel free to email or call me!

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Retiring NEI Director Paul Sieving, MD, PhD, center, holds a plaque of recognition presented to him by NAEVR/AEVR Boards President Paul Lee, MD, JD (Kellogg Eye Center/University of Michigan) and Alliances' Executive Director James Jorkasky



Acting NEI Director
Santa Tumminia, PhD



Acting NEI Deputy Director
Mary Frances Cotch, PhD

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