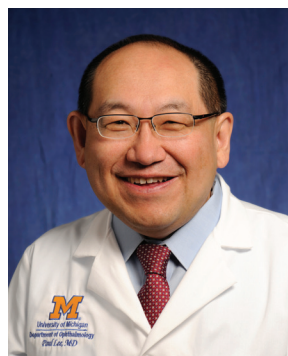


PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Seeking Relief for Vision Researchers



The Boards hope that you are staying well and adjusting as best as you can to the constant change we see while meeting the challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this Report, which includes information through late July, you will see that the Alliances have continued to be active in service of our vision research community—both in terms of NAEVR advocacy and AEvR education. We have also continued to broaden opportunities for input for our community as well as representation of our membership and community.

First, the Boards wish to congratulate Michael Chiang, MD in his new role as National Eye Institute (NEI) Director, which

he starts later this year (see box below). As NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD has noted, Michael brings a wealth of clinical and research experience to the position, as well as his knowledge about telehealth and “Big Data” that are increasingly driving the future of research and clinical practice. We would be remiss if the Boards did not thank Acting NEI Director Santa Tumminia, PhD for her leadership this past year and engagement of her team with NAEVR and ARVO, as evidenced by the summary of the June 26 NEI Webinar within the Report. That session and the May 19 Department of Defense (DOD) Webinar connected the vision community with its two largest federal funders.

Despite differences between the House and Senate supplementals, the final bill is the best short-term chance for research relief.

Under Executive Director Jim Jorkasky's leadership, NAEVR has engaged in Capitol Hill advocacy—directly and with coalition partners—in calls with Congressional appropriations leaders and their staff on the need for science agency grantee relief, especially at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), due to laboratory shutdowns. Since relief could come in the form of a Congressional supplemental or emergency funding as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) spending bill, you could well imagine how process-oriented those calls have been, especially since they include discussions of budget caps and one-time emergency funding that does not increase the NIH base. At this time, the House has proposed \$3 billion in research relief in its fifth supplemental (the *HEROES* Act) and

\$5 billion in its FY2021 LHHS spending bill, while the Senate has just started releasing portions of its fifth supplemental (the *HEALS* Act) with \$10 billion in research relief and has not yet released any FY2021 appropriations bills. The bottom line is that, despite expected differences between the House and Senate supplementals, the final bill is the best short-term chance for research relief, as FY2021 appropriations will likely not be finalized until late 2020/early 2021 and the government will be operating under a Continuing Resolution when FY2021 begins on October 1.

To emphasize the value of research and the importance of added research funding, AEvR will engage 22 early-stage investigators virtually in Capitol Hill education during its September 23 *Sixth Annual Emerging Vision Scientists Day on Capitol Hill* and September 24 NAEVR Advocacy Day. Since Dr. Collins has expressed his concern about the impact of lab shutdowns on the next generation of scientists, AEvR has planned to engage the EVSSs in a virtual “Conversation about the Impact of COVID-19,” which will be shared with legislative offices. The two days of events begin with AEvR's annual *International Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) Awareness Week* Congressional Briefing, which has a theme of *Artificial Intelligence in Retinal Diseases*—a topic of great interest to Dr. Chiang.

The Boards have been active on two fronts—electing new Directors and approving a new Membership Council Pilot Program, both actions of which are described in the Report. The Alliances list the current roster of 15 Directors, including those elected in May to fill seats of term-limited Directors and those elected in July to fill vacant seats. The Boards appreciate the commitment and service of those who retired in May and thank those recently elected for their willingness to serve. Regarding the new Member Councils that reflect the three membership sectors—Professional Societies, Industry, and Foundations/Patient Service/Research Organizations—I am sending a letter to each member organization soliciting a candidate to represent their interests in initial calls to be scheduled later this year.

The Boards appreciate the financial support from each member organization and encourage all to engage in the Alliances' efforts to seek Congressional support for vision research.

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NAEVR Congratulates New NEI Director Michael Chiang, MD



Michael Chiang, MD

On July 24, NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD announced that Michael Chiang, MD will begin his new role as Director of the NEI in late 2020.

Currently, Dr. Chiang serves as the Knowles Professor of Ophthalmology & Medical Informatics and Clinical Epidemiology at Oregon Health & Science University, and is Associate Director of the OHSU Casey Eye Institute. Dr. Collins stated, “Dr. Chiang brings extensive experience as a clinician, researcher, and educator to NIH. His work in biomedical informatics and telehealth research are particularly important for the future of vision research.”

In that regard, in October 2019 Dr. Chiang was the featured speaker at the *World Sight Day 2019* Congressional Briefing held by VISION 2020 USA and 18 vision organizations, including AEvR. Dr. Chiang spoke about the potential to harness Artificial Intelligence to better diagnose and treat various eye diseases, as well as to predict systemic health issues.



AEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky speaks with Dr. Chiang and Victoria Sheffield from the International Eye Foundation (IEF) at the October 2019 Briefing. Ms. Sheffield recently retired from her role as President & CEO of IEF, and the Alliances thank her for her contributions to global eye health.

AEVR Announces September 2020 Virtual Events

September 23
AEVR Congressional Briefing Recognizing International AMD Awareness Week—Artificial Intelligence in Retinal Diseases: Focus on AMD and Diabetic Retinopathy
12 Noon – 1:15 pm

AEVR's Sixth Annual Emerging Vision Scientists Day on Capitol Hill: EVS Videos and a Conversation about the Impact of COVID-19
(supported by a grant from Research to Prevent Blindness)

Full details and an RSVP for the Briefing link will be posted on the Web site.