

2022 SIGHT+SOUND

FALL EDITION



José Zevallos, MD, MPH, FACS

A New Era For Otolaryngology

As the new Chair and Dr. Eugene N. Myers Endowed Chair of the Department of Otolaryngology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, José Zevallos has a vision. His priorities and new initiatives will advance the Department in many ways.

“As Chair, I aspire to build innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit into everything we do, whether that be surgical care, education, or research,” he said.

Dr. Zevallos comes to Pittsburgh from the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri. There, he was Division Chief and Professor of Head and Neck Surgical Oncology.

Having amassed two degrees (MD, MPH), Dr. Zevallos chose Pittsburgh as the next step in his career. “The University of Pittsburgh is one of the elite otolaryngology programs in the United States, and the faculty includes several of our specialty’s most prominent thought leaders and visionaries,” he said. “I was drawn by the opportunity to build upon this remarkable foundation to develop a new standard of excellence in academic otolaryngology.”

His priorities and new initiatives include:

Population Sciences Center: The head and neck cancer translational research program at UPMC is one of the strongest in the nation. One area where there is an opportunity to make a larger impact is in population sciences in head and neck cancer. “We intend to recruit national leaders in head and neck cancer

epidemiology to focus on primary prevention, early detection, and improving head and neck cancer disparities in access to care and outcomes,” Dr. Zevallos said.

Complex Airway Center: There is an opportunity to build a multidisciplinary team focus on complex airway surgery and airway reconstruction. Few centers in the United States have dedicated teams like this. Coupled with a strong translational research program, a complex airway center could serve as a regional and national referral center.

Head and Neck Microbiome Research: Disruption of the microbiome is central to many of the conditions treated by otolaryngologists, including sinus disease, otitis media, and even head and neck cancer. “Over the next several years, I hope to leverage the existing strengths in microbiome research at the University of Pittsburgh to support a group of clinicians and scientists focused on understanding how microbiome dysbiosis affects diseases of the head and neck,” Dr. Zevallos said.

PHRC 2.0: Dr. Zevallos will work with Dr. Tzounopoulos and his team to develop the phase of the Pittsburgh Hearing Research Center (PHRC). This highly successful program in hearing sciences is already among the best in the United States. Over the next five years, they would like to usher in PHRC 2.0, with an emphasis on developing an incubator space where novel research discoveries can be rapidly evaluated and translated for potential commercialization.

Dr. Zevallos realizes the importance of the Eye & Ear Foundation supporting the Department, and how lucky he is to have that because it is not the case for other departments and universities. Donate at eyeandear.org to support the research listed. **S+S**

In This Issue

Improving Care by Understanding Social Impact on Health	2
Addressing the Needs Within our Community	3
The Art of the Vision Institute	4
Pittsburgh CREATES	5
The Philosophical Approach to Giving	6
A Shining Light for the Eye & Ear Foundation	7
Muse Dinner 2022	Back Cover

All stories written by Lisa A. Goldstein

Improving Care by Understanding Social Impact on Health

As an ophthalmologist, Andrew Williams, MD, cares for patients with chronic eye diseases by prescribing medications and performing eye surgery. However, during his training, he realized that much of a disease's course occurs outside the scope of therapeutics.

For example, he said, a patient with diabetic retinopathy who cannot afford their diabetes medications would return to the clinic with worsened vision due to poorly controlled blood sugar. A patient with glaucoma who loses insurance would be lost to follow up and return later with permanent vision loss.

"The social circumstances in which people live significantly affect their eye health," Dr. Williams said. "These social factors are broadly described as social determinants of health. Informed by the experiences of my patients, I have driven my research focus into understanding the influence of social determinants of health on vision outcomes. Moreover, the larger goal of my research is to identify mechanisms to address these social factors in order to improve the way we deliver care for patients with social needs."

Support from the Henry L. Hillman Foundation has helped Dr. Williams and Department Chair José-Alain Sahel, MD, begin new projects to understand social determinants of health more deeply and to test certain interventions that may improve access and adherence to medical care. Additionally, the Community Outreach Committee of the Eye & Ear Foundation Board of Directors has helped to convene local experts from all around the county to discuss the best ways to serve people who may be less likely to receive care due to social determinants of health. A recent collaboration with Department Chair José-Alain Sahel, MD, resulted in an article, "Addressing Social Determinants of Vision Health," published online in June and in the

August 2022 issue of the *Ophthalmology and Therapy Journal*. Drs. Williams and Sahel set out to examine the existing literature on social determinants of health on vision outcomes.

"This article brings together our perspectives from our unique roles, with my strong research interests in the area and Dr. Sahel's one-of-a-kind track record in leadership at the intersection of ophthalmology and addressing social needs," Dr. Williams said. "Dr. Sahel has made access to eye care a priority for the department, and several initiatives have made UPMC Eye Center a national leader in addressing social needs for eye patients. For example, he implemented a patient navigator position in the department, who functions to connect patients with community resources to promote eye health and continued follow up. Additionally, he has worked with community organizations to promote free vision screening through the Mission of Mercy and Vision to Learn initiatives. By putting these programs in the context of published literature, our article provides a unique framework that can promote data-driven expansion of public health initiatives in ophthalmology to address social determinants of health."

As the article states, "In Healthy People 2030, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services broadly groups social determinants of health into five domains: economic stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, and social and community context."

Recognizing the gap between understanding the role of social determinants in health and the ability to address these social needs in clinical settings, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recently published guidelines to integrate social care with health care delivery. This



José-Alain Sahel, MD




Andrew Williams, MD

framework for action has already been adapted by many healthcare providers like dermatologists, internists, and pediatricians. Thanks to Drs. Williams and Sahel, now there is one for ophthalmologists.

The recommendations to address social needs are summarized as the five As: awareness, assistance, adjustment, alignment, and advocacy. "By organizing screening initiatives and community collaborations into a larger framework, we believe that our manuscript can provide an outline for other departments and community practices to bring attention to the critically important social needs of our patients," Dr. Williams said.

Indeed, Dr. Sahel reported that the paper has had a strong impact. Feedback from other ophthalmologists has been overwhelmingly positive.

"The framework in our article is a constructive starting point for discussion in order to build programs like ours in other settings," said Dr. Williams. 



A few Mission of Mercy volunteers

Addressing the Needs Within our Community

For the first time in its six-year history, Mission of Mercy Pittsburgh had three clinics: dental, vision, and hearing. Over 1,465 patients received free quality care at the successful event, held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center on August 5-6, 2022.

“It is overwhelming to see how much need there is for these services in our own community,” said Lawton Snyder, Chief Executive Officer of the Eye & Ear Foundation (EEF), one of the event sponsors. This was the second year the Eye & Ear Foundation and the Department of Ophthalmology participated in the event. Supporting the initiatives in the Departments of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology at the University of Pittsburgh to provide health care and related services to the medically underserved is the mission of EEF’s Board of Directors robust Community Outreach Committee, led by Nancy Washington, PhD, and Chuck Brodbeck.

Thanks to 1,155 volunteers, including Pitt faculty, EEF staff, and Board members, eye care was provided to 735 patients. Of that group, 681 received free pairs of glasses, including 75 children. Hearing tests were conducted on 417 patients, 229 people received hearing aids, and 25 patients were gifted with simple amplifiers.

One impressive thing about the event is just because the care is free does not mean it diminished quality. One gentleman came in for a hearing test but was unsure if he would wait as he was in extreme pain from his tooth extraction. His hearing test was expedited, for which he was incredibly thankful. He said he was a retired police officer who – despite having insurance throughout the years and receiving dental, vision, and hearing care in the past – had never received care as great as what he got at Mission of Mercy.

Keith Young, Chairman of A Call to Care and sponsor of the event, said there were countless heartwarming stories from patients and volunteers about Mission of Mercy’s impact. The most frequently heard comment was that of genuine gratitude. “I cannot count the number of times I personally heard

that, nor can I count the number of times volunteers (and our planning team) talked about the amazing level of appreciation from both patients and volunteers,” he added.

Everyone—from the patients, dentists, eye and hearing clinicians to the nurses and general volunteers—quickly sense that this annual community event is about so much more than dental, hearing, and eye care. Kindness and compassion are at the heart of everything we do. The dignity of every patient is celebrated—providing them with services that alleviate their pain, improve their hearing and eyesight, boost their confidence, enhance their overall health, and give them their smile back. Perspectives change, friendships are forged, and hope thrives. This annual event is truly becoming part of the fabric of the western Pennsylvania area. **S+S**

2022 \$ Value Results	Total Value Provided	Per Patient Value
\$ Value Dental Care	\$1,010,810	\$1,037
\$ Value Eye Care	\$170,520	\$232
\$ Value Hearing Care	\$60,882	\$146
\$ Value Patients Receiving Hearing Aids	\$314,300	\$1,400 (2 aids) \$700 (1 aid)
Total \$ Value Dental, Eye, Hearing	\$1,556,512	*

The next MoM Pittsburgh Clinic is June 22-24 at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.



Artist, Kipp Kobayashi's, suspended "Message in a Bottle" sculpture represents wishes, hopes and dreams. It references Pittsburgh's glass history and rivers. Created with community participation. kippkobayashi.com

The Art of the Vision Institute

The Vision Institute's East Atrium, which leads to the elevator near the Low Vision and Rehabilitation Clinics, will feature a suspended sculpture with hundreds of different colored glass vessels. Conceptualized by Kipp Kobayashi of Los Angeles, the glass will be sourced locally. Each vessel will hold handwritten and printed notes from patients.

"We wanted to integrate art as a dimension of care and not simply decoration," University of Pittsburgh Department of Ophthalmology Chair Dr. José-Alain Sahel said. "Obviously, the aesthetics had to be compelling, but the artists who competed had to understand the holistic perspective their creation would be part of, and to propose an explicit or implicit message that will contribute to improving patients' experience."

Indeed, the artwork in the building was chosen intentionally. There was a national call for artists who had to join a pre-qualified pool to be considered for commissions. Of approximately 250 applications, 120 artists were selected to be in this pool. The selection committee reviewed 20-25 artists for each commission. Members of this committee included Laura Fisher, Senior Director of

Strategy and Partnership at UPMC; Nancy Washington, community member, patient, and Eye & Ear Foundation Board member; Eric Crosby, Director of the Carnegie Museum of Art, Lenore Thomas, Chair of the University of Pittsburgh Art Department; Dr. Sylvia Rhor Samaniego, Curator and Director of the University Art Gallery at the University of Pittsburgh; Dan Leers, Curator of Photography, Carnegie Museum of Art, and several providers, including Ophthalmology Department Chair, Dr. José-Alain Sahel and Dr. Gwendolyn Sowa, Chair, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. The process has been guided by art consultant Renee Piechocki.

Artists were selected based on the quality of their past work and how their practice aligned with the goals of the program. They had site visits, conducted independent research, and participated in an artist's intensive where they met with providers and stakeholders.

Several of the artworks are kinetic and two are interactive, responding to touch and sound. All artists considered the needs of patients and caregivers in their specific locations.

"There was a constructive dialogue with Kipp," Dr. Sahel said. "He embraced my idea to flow onto his piece light waves that hopefully will inspire fluidity and optimism."

The art will be in publicly accessible areas and assist in wayfinding. Two of the artists are from Pittsburgh, and three self-identify as artists with disabilities – including one who lost his vision in the Vietnam War.

Another key aspect of the artwork is to stimulate conversation and facilitate connection – not just for patients, but for caregivers as well. Not only will people's experience with the art change each time they visit the building, but some key pieces are being created to make a visit to the Vision Institute a more aesthetic pleasing and relaxing experience.

Naming opportunities are available in the Vision Institute (opening April 2023) at the UPMC Mercy Pavilion. Email contact@eyeandear.org for more information before February 1, 2023. 

Pittsburgh CREATES

CREATES (Collaborative Research, Education And Technology Advancement in Surgery) has been productive in the last six months.

Funded by a grant to the Eye & Ear Foundation by an anonymous local foundation, and spearheaded by the Department of Otolaryngology since 2017, Pittsburgh CREATES is a collaboration between the medical industry, bioengineers, and surgeons to develop new surgical technology and train the next generation of surgeons in the use of advanced surgical technologies.

“The momentum behind CREATES continues to build, and I am excited to see the center develop into a hub for surgical innovation and education for the Pittsburgh biotech community,” said José Zevallos, Otolaryngology Department Chair.

In April, Norman Gottron was hired as the new Director. According to his bio, he brings a multi-disciplinary background to

the center with over 14 years of experience in engineering, research, management of shared lab facilities, consulting, business development, and partnerships between industry and academia.

Personnel-wise, there were two new hires and one promotion. In May, the center hosted a lab event with a division of Medtronic, where surgeons evaluated some new products from the company.

In July, Dr. Uma Duvvuri, Medical Director, and Gottron attended the Society of Robotic Surgery in Orlando. In early September, they hosted students from a Carnegie Mellon Surgical Robotics course. Dr. Duvvuri gave a lecture and a hands-on training session on the Intuitive Da Vinci surgical system that is housed in CREATES. Students had a chance to sit at the operator console and manipulate the actual robot.

Gottron has been working with key opinion leaders over the past couple of months

to redefine CREATES’ mission and vision statements. “It was an opportune time to evaluate the changing landscape for innovation at the university as we collectively pull through the COVID-era with new personnel in place,” he said. “Over a couple of meetings, we took a critical look at our past successes and opportunities as we considered what distinguishes us at the university. The statements are being finalized now and will be published to the website in the near future.”

Two years after COVID, interactions with external companies are ramping up again, so CREATES is augmenting its existing pipeline and continuing to make progress on projects.

“I feel there is great potential for CREATES,” Gottron said. “I look forward to engaging with stakeholders across Pitt, UPMC, and externally as we look to take the next steps as an organization.” **S+S**



Areas of Focus



The Philosophical Approach to Giving

Sheldon Marstine did everything right with his business and continues to do everything right as a philanthropist. He was the owner and CEO of Zenith Support in Pittsburgh's Strip District for several generations. Now he is making sure future generations maintain their vision.

In 2012, Marstine donated to the Eye & Ear Foundation to show his appreciation for the care Dr. Dhaliwal provided. His

giving never stopped. He has supported Dr. Dhaliwal's research, Dr. Jhanji's research, the Funderburgh Cornea Regeneration Initiative, and general research for the department.

"Sheldon is one of the most interesting people I have ever met," Snyder said. "He is very humble and proud of his business and the 15 employees who worked for him. He is also very knowledgeable on history, politics, and philosophy. Recently

I had dinner with Sheldon and Dr. Sahel, and I wish I had recorded some of the conversations. I've had some of my most interesting conversations over meals with Sheldon. I always know I'm going to learn something new when I see him."

When asked why he gives to vision research, Marstine simply said, "It's a blessing and a privilege to have the ability to give and giving is just my philosophy." **S+S**



Dr. Deepindar Dhaliwal, Sheldon Marstine, Annette Blum, and Lawton Snyder

A Shining Light for the Eye & Ear Foundation

With the passing of Marian Mosites this past July, the Eye & Ear Foundation has lost a generous and kind soul. A head and neck cancer survivor, her experience led to the establishment at EEF of the Marian Mosites Initiative for Personalized Head and Neck Cancer Research in 2014. During its tenure, the initiative raised tens of thousands of dollars to advance research and treatment of head and neck cancer.

Marian's involvement started when she noticed a lump in her neck in 1997. While preliminary tests did not indicate a spread of cancer, she visited Dr. Eugene N. Myers to be sure. Despite his initial suspicion that it was not cancer, Dr. Myers performed a biopsy that showed otherwise. The cancer had spread from her tonsil into her lymph nodes. Surgical removal of the cancer, followed by radiation and chemotherapy proved to be successful, and she remained cancer free.

Marian called Dr. Myers her knight in shining armor. "Throughout the diagnoses, the surgery, the post-operative treatment and the follow-up care, Dr. Myers and the department were so very skilled, knowledgeable and on the cutting edge of [their] field, yet so very kind, caring, and humble," she told EEF in 2015.

Marian and her family were so impressed by the treatment she received that expressing her gratitude by donating to EEF was "a sure bet." After hearing about the ways in which personalized medicine was the future of innovative treatment for head and neck cancer, the family went one step further by establishing the initiative in her name.

The Pittsburgh native – who lived to 90 – is survived by Steven Mosites, her husband of 67 years, along with five children, a dozen grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Daughter Cynthia Sunseri is on the Board of the Eye & Ear Foundation. Marian's obituary lists her love of cooking and natural talent for interior design, gardening, and fashion.

Whenever Lawton Snyder, Chief Executive Officer of EEF, spoke with Marian, she always put him in a good mood. "She was a ray of sunshine," he said of the woman whose family described her as a "sparkling and burning light who illuminated, inspired, and guided [them] to lead lives as joy-filled and giving as hers." **S+S**



Marian Mosites at her 90th birthday party

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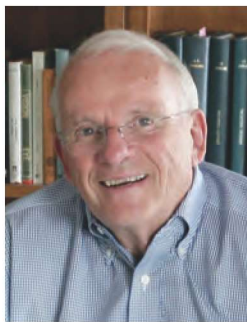
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THE EYE & EAR FOUNDATION PRESENTS

THE 2022 ALBERT C. MUSE PRIZE

*For Excellence for Research and
Advancement of Care in Ophthalmology*



John E. Dowling, PhD

*The Gordon and Llura Gun
Professor of Neurosciences Emeritus
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THE 2022 ALBERT C. MUSE AWARD

*Excellence for Innovation and
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Joel S. Schuman, MD, FACS

*The Elaine Langone Professor and Vice Chair for
Research in the Department of Ophthalmology
Professor of Neuroscience & Physiology at NYU
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Save the Date: November 17, 2022

*The Muse Prize and Award celebration benefits the Louis J. Fox Center for Vision
Restoration for Optic Nerve Regeneration Research at the University of Pittsburgh
Please visit eyeandear.org or email admin@eyeandear.org for more details.*