



WAYNE STATE

School of Medicine
Department of Ophthalmology,
Visual and Anatomical Sciences

**KRESGE EYE
INSTITUTE**

April 6, 2026

Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Selection Committee

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

We are pleased to nominate **Dr. Rao Me, MD**, a PGY-2 ophthalmology resident at Kresge Eye Institute, for participation in the Heed Residents Retreat as our second departmental nominee. We are committed to sponsoring her attendance should she be selected. Dr. Me is an exceptionally promising early-stage physician-scientist whose trajectory strongly aligns with the mission of the Heed Foundation to cultivate future leaders in academic ophthalmology. Dr. Me brings an unusually deep and sustained commitment to research, with over eight years of experience spanning basic science, translational investigation, and clinical ophthalmology. Her academic foundation was established during medical training and further strengthened through extensive postdoctoral work in corneal immunology under Dr. Fu-Shin Yu, where she made important contributions to understanding IL-36 and IL-17 signaling pathways in host defense against infectious keratitis. Her work provided key mechanistic insights into the balance between protective and pathologic inflammation and identified potential therapeutic targets in corneal disease.

She subsequently expanded her scientific scope through additional postdoctoral and translational research training, including leadership roles in projects investigating adaptive immunity and the role of regulatory T cells in maintaining the limbal stem cell niche. More recently, during her translational research fellowship at Kresge Eye Institute, she worked closely with our vitreoretinal faculty to apply multi-omics approaches to complex retinal diseases, including diabetic retinopathy, retinal detachment, and endophthalmitis. Her work examining mitochondrial DNA damage and epigenetic regulation in diabetic macular edema reflects both scientific rigor and a forward-looking vision for clinically relevant research.

Despite being early in her residency training, Dr. Me has already demonstrated remarkable scholarly productivity, with an extensive publication record and national presentations, including at ARVO and the Retina Society. She has received competitive recognition for her work, including a National Eye Institute travel grant and institutional research awards. Just as importantly, she has demonstrated the ability to lead projects, collaborate across disciplines, and translate complex scientific concepts into meaningful clinical questions.

Clinically, Dr. Me is developing into a thoughtful, diligent, and highly motivated resident. She approaches patient care with intellectual curiosity and a strong sense of responsibility, while actively seeking opportunities to integrate her scientific background into clinical decision-

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making. She is highly regarded by faculty and peers for her work ethic, professionalism, and collaborative spirit.

Dr. Me's long-term goal of establishing an independent research program at the intersection of immunity, metabolism, and neurodegeneration in ocular disease is both ambitious and well supported by her prior training and current trajectory. We believe that exposure to the Heed community at this stage will be particularly impactful in helping her refine her career path, build mentorship networks, and further develop as an academic ophthalmologist.

As our second nominee, we offer our full institutional support for her participation in the Heed Residents Retreat. We are confident that she will both benefit from and contribute meaningfully to this experience.

We recommend Dr. Me without reservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Juzych'.

Mark Juzych, MD, MHSA
Director, Kresge Eye Institute
Chairman, Dept of Ophthalmology,
Visual & Anatomical Sciences
Wayne State University SOM

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Reecha S. Bahl'.

Reecha S. Bahl, MD
Residency Program Director
DMC/WSU Ophthalmology Residency
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