

Learning ophthalmology has been quite the Journey. Starting back home in Egypt, going through residency, then coming to the United States, doing 2 fellowships, and now going through residency again. I have come to appreciate further the role of all the mentors that I have trained under through the years.

I grew up in a family where both my parents are faculty members, in the general surgery and medical biochemistry and Molecular biology departments. Growing up, I witnessed firsthand the effort that goes into preparing lectures, drafting training courses and workshops, and contributing to both basic science and clinical research. Yet, I have seen them approach the task with enthusiasm and dedication, rather than a burden to be carried out after work hours are over.

Before coming to the US, I was in the role of Assistant Lecturer of Ophthalmology at my home institution's ophthalmology department. I was actively involved in teaching and training. I worked with both medical students during ophthalmology rotation and residents. Transitioning to a new setting here in the US was not immediately easy, getting to adapt to a new system, but also gaining the opportunity to explore newer ideas, gain new skills, and work with many more colleagues has helped me grow further as an ophthalmologist. As a fellow, you find yourself both as a mentee and a mentor. Simultaneously, working closely with faculty to gain more knowledge and skills, and working with residents to help manage complex patients in your relevant field of interest.

I would say academic medicine has been home ever since I started, though I did venture into private practice at the same time for a few years before coming here. While this helped me improve on certain skills, academic medicine remained my preferred practice pattern. With greater emphasis on complex patient care, as well as the opportunity to participate in training future ophthalmologists.

However, in recent years, real-world data have shown declining interest among residents in pursuing careers in academic medicine. This trend carries significant implications for the future of our specialty. In addition to my personal goals, I think it is a shared community goal to carry forward the role of educator to help guide those interested in ophthalmology and to hone the knowledge and skills of residents.

I intend to seek a career again in academic medicine after I finish my residency training, with special interest in cornea and anterior segment disorders, as well as pediatric anterior segment disorders. Being in a new country, I have looked to my seniors for guidance several times, and it is the same when thinking about my future career as when I am caring for patients. That is why I believe my participation would help me connect with colleagues who have made that transition, who can provide better guidance as I hope to switch to this role.

Thank you for considering my application. I am confident that participation in the retreat will help me grow as both an educator and clinician and further align my career with the mission of advancing ophthalmology through education, research, and service.