

M. Reza Vagefi, MD
Professor and Chair
Department of Ophthalmology
Director, New England Eye Center

April 27, 2026

RE: Hamid Alemi, MD, MPH

Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Annual Resident Retreat

Dear Society of Heed Fellows Trustees,

I am delighted to offer my full support for Dr. Hamid Alemi's application to participate in the Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Resident Retreat. Dr. Alemi is a PGY3 ophthalmology resident at the New England Eye Center at Tufts Medical Center whose background, trajectory, and professional goals are closely aligned with the mission of the Heed Retreat. He is pursuing a career in academic ophthalmology with a particular interest in vitreoretinal surgery, translational research, and new approaches to improve patient care.

Dr. Alemi brings an unusual depth of research experience to residency training. He completed his medical degree and Master of Public Health at Tehran University of Medical Sciences, where he entered on a full merit scholarship after earning the Gold Medal in Iran's National Biology Olympiad. He later completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Massachusetts Eye and Ear through the NIH T32 Molecular Bases of Eye Diseases program, followed by internship training at Yale New Haven Hospital before beginning ophthalmology residency at Tufts. This path has given him a strong foundation in clinical medicine, epidemiology, laboratory investigation, and translational science.

His work at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary was particularly formative. Dr. Alemi contributed to projects focused on corneal biology, endothelial injury and repair, ocular surface disease, and transplantation immunology. These included murine models of Descemet stripping only and endothelial keratoplasty, studies of chemical corneal injury, and

investigations of alpha-melanocyte stimulating hormone as a potential pharmacologic strategy to support corneal endothelial cell health after injury. This work has contributed to several peer-reviewed publications and national presentations, reflecting both his scientific discipline and his ability to contribute effectively within collaborative research environments. His research reflects a careful and methodical approach to clinically relevant questions and a genuine interest in connecting mechanisms of disease to future therapeutic possibilities.

Dr. Alemi has remained consistently productive as a scholar, with more than twenty peer-reviewed publications and multiple national presentations. His honors include selection for the NIH/NEI T32 fellowship, ARVO Foundation Travel Grants, recognition as an ARVO Best Poster Finalist, and the Best Paper Award at the Eye Banking and Cornea Forum. Beyond the number of publications or awards, what stands out is the consistency of his engagement with meaningful scientific questions and his ability to contribute effectively within collaborative research environments.

Clinically, Dr. Alemi is thoughtful, grounded, and intellectually curious. His prior training in internal medicine provides him with a valuable perspective on systemic disease and complex patient care, which will serve him well as he develops within ophthalmology. He has expressed a growing interest in vitreoretinal surgery, a field that naturally brings together imaging, urgent clinical decision-making, technical precision, and innovation. At Tufts, he is training in an environment with a long tradition of ophthalmic imaging and retina discovery, and he has approached this opportunity with seriousness and maturity.

What distinguishes Dr. Alemi is not only his prior research record, but also the way he thinks about an academic career. He recognizes that academic ophthalmology requires mentorship, collaboration, persistence, and a willingness to build over time. He is seeking the Heed Resident Retreat as an opportunity to learn from leaders who have navigated this path successfully, to refine his own goals, and to develop the relationships that will help sustain his growth as a future academic ophthalmologist.



I strongly believe Dr. Alemi would be an excellent participant in the Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Resident Retreat. He brings scientific depth, clinical maturity, humility, and a clear commitment to a career that integrates patient care and investigation. I am confident that the retreat would provide meaningful mentorship and perspective as he continues to develop toward a future as a vitreoretinal surgeon-scientist.

Please feel free to contact me directly if I can provide any additional information. Dr. Alemi has waived the opportunity to review this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Reza Vagefi'.

M. Reza Vagefi, MD

Professor and Chair, Department of Ophthalmology

Tufts University School of Medicine

Director, New England Eye Center

Tufts Medical Center | Tufts Medicine

