



Dear Members of the Heed Foundation Trustees:

I am pleased to recommend Dr. Hamzah Aweidah to attend the Heed Foundation Residents Retreat. Dr. Aweidah is currently a first-year resident at the residency program at University of Pittsburgh.

Dr. Aweidah is bound for a career as a clinician-scientist.

As you will read in his bio-sketch Dr. Aweidah has a demonstrated record of scholarship far in excess of the typical resident. He has a sustained and focused research trajectory in retinal disease, spanning basic science, translational work, and clinical studies. He has been continuously involved in research since 2013, including a long period at the Hadassah Center for Retinal and Macular Degenerations followed by a dedicated vitreoretinal research fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh from 2021-2024. His work centers on inherited retinal degenerations, gene therapy, and cell-based therapies, with projects that include CRISPR-based development of a non-human primate model for PRPF31 retinitis pigmentosa and AAV-mediated gene therapy approaches. He also has experience as a sub-investigator in multiple phase 1–3 clinical trials in retinal disease.

In terms of scholarly output, he has 11 peer-reviewed publications, including 5 first-author papers in journals such as *Journal of Ocular Pharmacology and Therapeutics*, *Molecular Vision*, and *Clinical Ophthalmology*, along with co-authored work in *Frontiers in Cell and Developmental Biology*. His work spans stem cell transplantation, retinal genetics, genotype–phenotype correlation, and teleophthalmology. He has presented extensively, with numerous oral presentations at ARVO, ISVER, and other national/international meetings, often as first author.

Dr Eyal Banin with whom Dr Aweidah worked at Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center wrote in his letter, *“From very early on, Hamzah proved himself as an energetic clinician who is very eager to learn, able to master difficult topics, highly committed to his patients, and a skillful surgeon.”*

Dr Leah Byrne, Dr Aweidah’s research advisor during the 2 years he spent in research before joining the residency program wrote in her letter of recommendation, *“Throughout his time in the lab, Dr. Aweidah has demonstrated a dedication to his research and to patients, an eagerness to create new therapies for unmet medical needs, and a strong desire to learn new skills.”*

Though Dr Aweidah is currently in his first year of training at the Vision Institute, he completed an ophthalmology residency and retina fellowship in Israel prior to joining our program.

As expected, he has received strong marks and comments from our clinical faculty members.

Department of Ophthalmology
School of Medicine

Evan L Waxman MD PhD
Professor
Vice Chair for Education
Director, Comprehensive Eye Service
1622 Locust Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412-647-2200
elw3@pitt.edu

- *“Consistently demonstrates a thorough and thoughtful approach to patient care.”*
- *“Hamzah's broad knowledge base and skills are an asset.”*
- *“He was consistently reliable and a stabilizing presence on the team.”*
- *“Demonstrated maturity and independence consistent with graduation readiness”*

In short, Dr Aweidah is an accomplished ophthalmology resident and scientist. With proper mentorship, we know he will succeed in an academic ophthalmology career. We are grateful that the Heed Foundation has created this mechanism to assist our residency program as we provide support for his interests and endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Evan L Waxman', with a stylized, flowing script.

Evan L Waxman MD PhD
Professor
Vice Chair for Education
Director, Comprehensive Eye Service