



4/27/2026

Department of Ophthalmology
School of Medicine

Dear Members of the Heed Foundation Trustees:

I am pleased to recommend Dr. Gagan Kalra to attend the Heed Foundation Residents Retreat. Dr. Kalra is currently a PGY-3 resident at the University of Pittsburgh Vision Institute and is committed to a career as an academic vitreoretinal surgeon and clinician-scientist.

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Dr. Kalra has an unusually strong and consistent record of scholarship for a resident at this stage. His work centers on ophthalmic imaging, artificial intelligence, and translational retinal disease research. He has developed machine learning approaches for detection and monitoring of geographic atrophy, hydroxychloroquine toxicity, and ellipsoid zone changes on OCT, and has contributed to quantitative imaging analyses in prospective clinical trials, including the PRIME study. His work reflects a clear focus on improving how we diagnose and follow retinal disease in both clinical and research settings.

In terms of scholarly output, Dr. Kalra has authored more than 40 peer-reviewed publications, including first-author work in Ophthalmology Retina and Survey of Ophthalmology. He has contributed to widely cited reviews on OCT angiography biomarkers and has presented work at national meetings. He also serves as a guest editor for a telemedicine collection and has completed peer review for multiple journals. This level of productivity, breadth, and independence is well above what we typically see during residency.

Dr. Kalra's work extends beyond imaging science. He has been involved in telemedicine innovation since medical school, including early work on smartphone-based postoperative care. He continues to study and implement teleophthalmology approaches and is engaged in community outreach through Eyes on Wheels, providing care to underserved populations. These efforts reflect a sustained interest in access, equity, and practical implementation of new care models.

Clinically, Dr. Kalra has performed strongly. Faculty consistently note his organization, work ethic, and ability to integrate complex information into patient care. He is thoughtful, reliable, and functions at a high level for his training year. He brings the same discipline to his clinical work that is evident in his research.

In short, Dr. Kalra is a highly productive and focused physician-scientist in training with clear academic goals and a track record that supports them. The Heed Residents Retreat would provide an important opportunity for mentorship and career development as he continues to build a career at the intersection of imaging, technology, and retinal disease.

We appreciate the Heed Foundation's continued support of our residents and their development.

This letter represents my second nomination for the Heed Residents Retreat this cycle. If both nominees are selected, our program is prepared to support funding for a second resident, in accordance with the program requirements.

Sincerely,

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

Evan Waxman
Residency Program Director
UPMC Vision Institute
University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
Department of Ophthalmology