

When people ask what led me to ophthalmology, they rarely expect one of my answers to be a conference. But, my experiences at the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology (AUPO) annual meetings were pivotal in shaping my path. Beginning in my first year of medical school, I became involved in medical education research, examining gender and racial disparities in ophthalmology training and the very systems underlying residency selection. I was fortunate to present these projects at AUPO twice during medical school, and again as an intern. The first time I attended the meeting, it was deeply inspiring. I was struck by how leaders in the field came together to critically evaluate and improve how we train future ophthalmologists, discussing everything from reimagining surgical education to improving equity in the match process. Witnessing these discussions made me realize that academic ophthalmology is not only about advancing scientific knowledge, but also about shaping systems to better support learners and patients alike. I left these meetings with a clear aspiration to become a leader who truly cares and strives to find ways to create meaningful and lasting improvements in the field.

Since starting residency, I have worked to channel this vision into action within our program even as a junior resident. I have strived to strengthen the training environment for those around me by formalizing aspects of the wet lab and intern curriculum, contributing to quality improvement initiatives to streamline cataract preoperative processes, and creating resources for future junior residents.

Simultaneously, I am still working to build upon the research interests that first brought me to ophthalmology. I have continued my work examining gender disparities in ophthalmology, while also expanding into cornea-focused research on corneal transplantation outcomes. In parallel, I have become part of several research groups within Women in Ophthalmology (WIO), including the Women in Ophthalmology Academic Research Network (WORK) group, where I helped author the group's first published project. I am also a part of the WIO Speaker Training Task Force, which is currently developing a public speaking training program to address gaps in professional development for women.

Outside of research and residency, I have sought to become a part of the broader ophthalmology community. In addition to my involvement in WIO's various research groups, I am a part of WIO NYC's social media and outreach committee. I have also become involved in cornea leadership in the community as a board member on the NYC Eye Bank Leadership Council to spread community awareness about corneal transplantation and the eye bank.

Looking ahead, my career goal is to become an academic ophthalmologist dedicated to advancing both scientific discovery and medical education. I hope to one day serve as a residency program director, where I can help shape and mentor the next generation of ophthalmologists. More broadly, I hope to contribute as a leader at the institutional, national, and international levels and work to support both trainees and patients. The Heed Resident Retreat represents a unique opportunity to further develop the skills to achieve these goals. I would love to engage with peers and leaders of the field who share a commitment to academic ophthalmology, and to continue building a career grounded in a desire to make meaningful, lasting contributions within ophthalmology. Ultimately, I hope to be part of a generation of leaders who not only work to advance ophthalmology scientifically, but also have a sustained commitment to improving the field as a whole.