

Yale SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Science

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Dear Heed Ophthalmic Foundation,

It is with tremendous enthusiasm and the highest level of support that I nominate Eric Lai to attend the Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Residency Retreat. As Chair of the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science at Yale School of Medicine, I have had the privilege of watching Eric develop into an extremely accomplished and well-rounded resident in our program. Eric's path to ophthalmology began early, guided by his father who has served as Chair of Ophthalmology at a large medical university for over twenty years. Growing up immersed in the world of medicine and watching his father build his career, Eric internalized from an early age what it means to be an academic physician. After working as an ophthalmic technician and photographer, he quickly made the decision to pursue medical school and ophthalmology residency.

Eric's exceptional character and leadership were recognized by our faculty when he was selected as our program's sole Chief Resident for the 2026 – 2027 academic year. This is no small distinction in a competitive program such as ours. The role demands not only outstanding clinical performance, but also the maturity, judgment, and collaborative spirit to lead an entire resident cohort while serving as a bridge between trainees, faculty, and hospital administration. Eric embodies all of these qualities. His co-residents speak of him with admiration and trust, and our faculty consistently describe his work ethic, professionalism, and team-first attitude as exemplary. In clinic and in the operating room, Eric has demonstrated the technical precision and sound clinical reasoning that defines an excellent trainee; as a result, he has already gained strong surgical volume and experience across all subspecialties in residency. As he prepares to pursue a fellowship in vitreoretinal surgery, I am confident that he possesses all the qualities that programs are seeking.

Eric's scholarly productivity in his early career has been impressive thus far. He has co-authored over 25 peer-reviewed publications in high-impact journals, including first author publications in Ophthalmology, Ophthalmology Retina, OSLI, BMJ Open Ophthalmology, Canadian Journal of Ophthalmology, and more. He has contributed three peer-reviewed book chapters, including a full-length chapter in Ryan's Retina, a landmark reference in our field. His research spans a broad range of clinical topics including vitamin A deficiency retinopathy, advanced techniques in vitreoretinal surgery, and new emerging therapies in medical retina. Eric has presented his work at national and international meetings, including American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology (AUPO), the Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology (APAO), the Atlantic Coast Retina Conference (ACRC), American Society of Retina Specialists (ASRS), Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO), and more. This level of scholarly output is exceptional for a resident and speaks directly to the academic rigor and independence that Eric has cultivated throughout his training.

Beyond his research, Eric has won multiple awards, including the Yale Academic Excellence Award twice for scoring above the 90th percentile on the OKAP exam two years in a row. He was selected by our Emergency Department as Consultant of the Month, recognized for excellence in clinical judgement, communication, and commitment to multi-disciplinary emergency care. He has won multiple research awards since medical school. Eric has also made meaningful contributions to medical education, serving as a teacher and mentor for Yale medical students in ophthalmology courses. He serves on the Editorial Board of the British Journal of Ophthalmology as Social Media Editor, where he translates peer-reviewed science into accessible digital content for an audience of over 13,000 followers. He is also passionate about global ophthalmology, having experience serving as clinic lead in Roatan, Honduras with our faculty members. His diverse leadership positions and experience have prepared him to become an excellent physician in our field.

The Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Residency Retreat is precisely the kind of environment where Eric will thrive – surrounded by the best and brightest in ophthalmology, exchanging ideas, forging mentorship relationships, and contributing his own thoughtful perspectives to the field. He is precisely the kind of future leader that the Heed Foundation is designed to identify and support. As a department committed to the highest ideals of patient care, education, and research, we are proud to nominate Eric with our fullest and most enthusiastic endorsement.

Note: In the event that two residents from our program are chosen, the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science will cover one resident's costs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lucian V. Del Priore".

Lucian V. Del Priore, MD, PhD
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Yale School of Medicine
Ophthalmologist-in-Chief, Yale New Haven Hospital