

My name is Arshia Eshtiaghi, and I am a third-year ophthalmology resident at the University of Toronto. Prior to this, I obtained a Bachelor of Health Sciences at McMaster University and my MD at the University of Toronto.

It is a privilege to apply to the HEED Ophthalmic Foundation Residents Retreat, an opportunity I see as both professionally formative and personally meaningful as I continue to shape my career in academic ophthalmology.

My interest in medicine was first shaped by scientific curiosity and the drive to translate knowledge into meaningful patient care. I found these same themes of innovation and impact reflected in ophthalmology. Few fields have evolved as rapidly over the past two decades, with transformative advances in imaging, microsurgery, and therapeutics. As a medical student, I became deeply involved in ophthalmology research, an experience that solidified my commitment to the field. To date, I have authored over 30 peer-reviewed publications and presented my work at more than 30 ophthalmology conferences, experiences that have strengthened both my academic interests and my appreciation for collaborative discovery.

Entering residency, I maintained a broad interest in general ophthalmology and approached my training with the goal of exploring all subspecialties and learning as much as I can about the eye. It was during my cornea rotation in my third year where I then developed a strong affinity for cornea and external disease. I was particularly drawn to the field's blend of surgical innovation and impressive patient outcomes. I witnessed great visual outcomes with various procedures such as DMEK, SLET, and ICRS placement, and was curious to learn about the ongoing research in cultured corneal endothelial cell injection therapy in Japan, or bioprinted corneas in Israel.

I now plan to pursue fellowship training in cornea and external disease. Following fellowship, I aim to apply the clinical and surgical skills I develop to improve patient outcomes in Toronto, contribute to resident and medical student education through mentorship and teaching, and remain actively involved in research that advances the field on a global scale. I am particularly interested in fostering collaborations that bridge clinical innovation and education across institutions.

The HEED Residents Retreat represents an exceptional opportunity to engage with peers and mentors who share an interest in academic ophthalmology. I am eager to learn from established leaders about the transition from residency to an academic career, while also building meaningful connections with colleagues across the United States. As a Canadian trainee from an institution with a strong academic tradition, I hope to contribute a unique perspective on training and collaboration, and to explore ways of expanding academic engagement beyond national boundaries. I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to participate in this program and to continue developing as a clinician, educator, and scholar within the field of ophthalmology.