HEED 2026 Application Personal Statement

My career in medicine thus far is rooted in my passion for health equity, access to care, and preventing blindness. I am a first-generation Black female physician and a PGY-1 Ophthalmology resident in the second class of the Ophthalmology residency at the University of New Mexico. My passions within medicine are driven by the lived experiences of a close family member with proliferative diabetic retinopathy and the millions of patients at high risk for preventable blindness who are currently not under the care of an Ophthalmologist.

During my time at Kaiser Permanente School of Medicine, I worked closely with my mentor Dr. Bobeck Modjtahedi, a vitreoretinal surgeon and researcher, on two projects focusing on diabetic retinopathy. The first project, titled *Glycemic Control in Patients After Initiation of Treatment for Vision Threatening Diabetic Retinopathy,* looked at quantitative data, specifically hemoglobin A1c (HgbA1c), and if the initiation of treatment for diabetic retinopathy had an effect. The aim of this project, which has led to a subsequent qualitative project currently in the works of being published, surrounds the question of what are the intrinsic or extrinsic motivating factors (or not) that lead to better glycemic control (or not). The goal is to understand patient motivations that can help prevent the development of diabetic retinopathy and/or progression to proliferative diabetic retinopathy and blindness. My second research project I conducted with Dr. Modjtahedi, *Results of a New Virtual Care Program for Patients Overdue for Diabetic Retinopathy Evaluation*, evaluated a new tele-retinal monitoring program for patients with established diabetic retinopathy to detect progression, identify patients that need to be seen in person more quickly, and to evaluate a multi-layered outreach approach to increase adherence to in person appointments.

My research in diabetic retinopathy in medical school led me to undergo a one-year research fellowship with Dr. Kristen Nwanyanwu, a health equity and diabetic retinopathy researcher and PI of the S.E.E.N Lab at Yale School of Medicine, to further explore health equity, community outreach, and mixed methods research. During my time with Dr. Nwanyanwu, I learned how to conduct qualitative research stemming from community outreach events and big data research with data stemming from years back and nationwide. I look forward to presenting and publishing this work for my fellow colleagues to read in the near future pertaining to the qualitative work I mentioned above and big data pertaining to tractional retinal detachments, an unfortunate sequela of proliferative diabetic retinopathy.

As for my career goals, I do intend to pursue fellowship, likely in vitreoretinal surgery as the subspecialty closely aligns with my research interests. Post training, I envision an impactful career filled with research that pushes the bounds of the current state of Ophthalmology and health equity and access to care. It is my goal to continue this mission to reduce the pipeline of patients going from diabetes to diabetic retinopathy (including proliferative) to blindness.

1. **Moore S,** Wu J, Pio J, Modjtahedi BS. Glycemic Control in Patients After Initiation of Treatment for Vision-Threatening Diabetic Retinopathy. *J Vitreoretin Dis*. 2024;8(3):257-262. Published 2024 Mar 14. Doi:10.1177/24741264241232191.
2. **Moore SG**; Sharma M, Hedayi R, Fong DS, Modjtahedi, BS. Results of a New Virtual Care Program for Patients Overdue for Diabetic Retinopathy Evaluation. *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science*. 2023;64(8):3757.