

April 27, 2026

Heed Ophthalmic Foundation and Society of Heed Fellows
655 Beach Street
San Francisco, CA 94109

Dear Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Resident Retreat Selection Committee:

It is our distinct pleasure to write this very strong letter nominating Dr. Mark Johnson for participation in the 20th Annual Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Resident Retreat. He is an innovative thinker, approachable mentor, and enthusiastic teacher, even at this early stage in his career; in other words, he is exactly the sort of person academic ophthalmology needs.

From that academic standpoint, Dr. Johnson has all the prerequisites to be an outstanding physician and surgeon. He is astoundingly quick to grasp (and apply) new concepts, and he is among the most self-motivated learners I have met. In talking to him, you realize that this self-motivation stems from a truly curious mind and a deep interest in the subject matter. Dr. Johnson simply wants to know more, about everything in ophthalmology, at all times. It's refreshing and, frankly, fun to see. Without any prompting, he consistently comes into clinic not only having mastered the subject matter for the day, but also having read the most recent literature and developed his own opinion on it. This enthusiasm and joy bleeds over into everyone else in his clinic or OR; when Dr. Johnson is around, everyone seems more interested in learning more about the subject and hearing him discuss the latest research.

In addition to his own passion to learn, Dr. Johnson is naturally adept at conveying his knowledge to others. I often find him passionately describing an exam finding or surgical technique to the other residents or medical students, and he does so in a simple, clear manner that indicates true understanding of the subject. He has a knack for interesting analogies and metaphors that help those around him understand and remember the material in the way he does (we've stolen a few of his analogies ourselves). Perhaps more importantly, though, Dr. Johnson is always relaxed and approachable, to attendings, residents, and medical students alike. No student is ever afraid to ask him a question or ask him for help, as he emanates openness and affability. In his future academic career, we have no doubt he will be among the most popular and effective mentors and teachers at whatever institution is lucky enough to hire him.

Lastly, Mark approaches problem solving with a creativity that we do not often see among residents. He is your clichéd "outside-the-box" thinker and is willing to question dogma. He often comes up with insights that others might overlook. As he builds his burgeoning research career, we are excited to see what he comes up with and know that whatever it is, it will be interesting and thought-provoking.

At this point, it almost goes without saying that Dr. Johnson is intelligent and inquisitive, with an affable demeanor that sometimes belies his discerning intellect. He will make an outstanding academic ophthalmologist and will excel in clinical care, research, and teaching. We give him our highest recommendation for this honor without reservation.

Sincerely,



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