

TOP FELLOWSHIP MOMENTS

Graduates share their most memorable experiences from glaucoma fellowship.



EMILY SCHEHLEIN, MD

The anesthesiologist, who is 40 years my senior, smiles gently and says, “He’s ready for you, Doc.” He is talking about my patient, the one on the table in front of me, who will soon undergo glaucoma surgery. I have been in this setting thousands of times before, but this time, I’m the one guiding the trainee’s hands. I’m the one gently urging her onward, and I’m the one with the final responsibility for surgical success.

The most memorable moment of my glaucoma fellowship was surely the experience of operating alone with a resident surgeon for the first time. My 25 years of education culminated in this moment in which I was determined not only to be skilled enough to successfully operate alone but also to teach another to do the same. We had reviewed all the steps, and she showed me exactly how she would proceed. She was ready. Was I? Could I teach her as well as I had been taught?

As I sat there, guiding my resident, I understood my own attendings’ pride when the conjunctiva was perfectly apposed and their frustration when a suture broke. I tried to keep my tone even and my movements slow and unalarming. The case was finished, the result looked excellent, and the patient would do very well. The resident and I debriefed and discussed each step. I gave her feedback that I had received only a few months prior: “A little tighter in the closure, and don’t leave your suture ends too long.” As we parted and I went to join my attending for the next case, the resident turned and said, “Thanks for teaching me.”



KAREN HONG, MD, MPHIL

The reason I went into glaucoma fellowship was to build lasting connections with patients. During fellowship, these connections presented in ways that I did not expect, whether over the phone or in the form of a kind note from a patient.

In one significant experience, I was caring for a patient with blebitis. Because I was initially monitoring the patient on an almost daily basis, we slowly got to know each other over the course of a month. I learned about his life as a single father, his passion for hockey, and his vacation plans for after his recovery. It was wonderful to see his personality emerge over time. It helped me motivate him to use his eye drops daily and taught me the importance of learning about my patients’ lives to better understand how glaucoma treatment fits into their lifestyle.

The encounter shaped how I recommend surgical, laser, and medical therapies. Does a patient enjoy swimming or deep-water diving? If so, I would counsel them

on trabeculectomy differently than I would someone who spends every day at home reading novels.

I would be remiss if I did not mention how fantastic it was to work with 12 attendings who were genuinely dedicated to teaching. However, doing so also meant attempting to keep track of all their unique surgical techniques and clinical practices! Early on, I started a running note on my phone to record pearls of wisdom I learned from each attending. Now I have a document filled with invaluable knowledge that I can reference for years to come.



JAE-CHIANG WONG, BS

I had the amazing privilege of taking part in the glaucoma research fellowship at Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia, where I was able to learn from incredibly brilliant, humble, and passionate glaucoma specialists. As a medical student, research in ophthalmology largely consists of literature reviews and data entry, during which 20/200 or bare light perception visual acuity become just numbers and acronyms. During my research fellowship, I learned to appreciate the meaning of these measurements.

During informed consent for my first patient for a study, the patient, unable to see the signature line, asked me to move their hand for them to sign. This moment gave me perspective on how 20/200 VA really affects a life. Research can be impersonal and binary, and this experience moved me. It gave meaning to my data entry and enhanced my perspective on research and its ability to help countless patients, present and future. ■

KAREN HONG, MD, MPHIL

- Glaucoma fellow, 2021-2022, Massachusetts Eye and Ear, Boston
- karenchen.eye@gmail.com
- Financial disclosure: Consultant (AbbVie)

EMILY SCHEHLEIN, MD

- Glaucoma fellow, 2021-2022, Johns Hopkins Wilmer Eye Institute, Baltimore
- Glaucoma and anterior segment surgeon, private practice, Michigan
- eschehl1@jhmi.edu
- Financial disclosure: None

JAE-CHIANG WONG, BS

- Glaucoma research fellow, 2021-2022, Wills Eye Hospital, Philadelphia
- Medical student, Rowan University Osteopathic School of Medicine, Stratford, New Jersey
- wongja82@rowan.edu
- Financial disclosure: None