Innovation in Retina

At the combined Retina Congress 2009, which comprised the American Society of Retina Specialists, the Macula Society, and the Retina Society, I had the distinct opportunity to introduce my friend and colleague, Mark Humayun, MD, PhD, from the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California, prior to his receiving the Retina Research Foundation Award.

Dr. Humayun has dedicated his life toward the goal of curing blindness thru a marriage of vitreoretinal surgery and biomedical engineering. Born into a family of physicians, the study of medicine came naturally to Dr. Humayun, and he was inspired to specialize in retina when his grandmother began losing her sight from diabetic retinopathy. Armed with a degree in medicine, a fellowship in retina, and a doctorate in biomedical engineering, he has tirelessly pursued the concept of the retinal prosthesis, an idea that he first conceived while he was an ophthalmology resident at Duke University.

The Argus retinal prosthesis (Second Sight Medical, Sylmar, CA) is the result of the extensive work by Dr. Humayun and his collaborators. Along with my colleagues from the Wills-Scheie team, I recently implanted the 60-electrode array Argus II retinal prosthesis in a patient with retinitis pigmentosa who had been legally blind since childhood and who had almost no vision at the time of surgery. In a recent article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*[1] this patient reported that he could see well enough, for instance, to "pick out blurry objects at the dinner table." This is a remarkable outcome.

This issue of *Retina Today* focuses on innovation. We have highlighted some promising areas of research in age-related macular degeneration with articles on new compounds in development and new approaches to gain better visual acuity for our patients. Additionally, we have timely and extensive coverage of the news gathered from the Retina Congress 2009. This year's meeting featured a wealth of new data in several areas of clinical research, and many of the innovations described may well influence future practice patterns. This is truly an exciting time for retina. ■

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1. Avril T. Implant gives new hope to the blind. The Philadelphia Inquirer. September 8, 2009; http://www.philly.com/philly/health_and_science/57680427.html?viewAll=y. Accessed October 7, 2009.