

Casey's Vision Rehabilitation celebrates 25 years of service



Alan Labrum, O.D.

Over the past 25 years, a lot has changed in how providers are able to serve people with vision loss and achieve the ultimate goal of helping them maintain a high quality of life.

The Vision Rehabilitation Center at OHSU Casey Eye Institute is the only clinical program in Oregon and the greater Pacific Northwest that offers

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comprehensive assessment and treatment planning for the effects of vision loss. This team of specialists work together to use treatments and education for adults and children to make the most of their remaining vision.

The idea for the Vision Rehabilitation Center came from its first medical director Michael L. Klein, MD. As a retina specialist, Dr. Klein saw a gap in care needed to address the quality of life and daily usefulness of patients experiencing vision loss due to diseases such as retinal, age-related macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy.

The Vision Rehabilitation Center was officially launched after hiring John Boyer, O.D., Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology, in 1998. Patients and providers alike experienced the benefits of working with experts in low vision assessment. By developing a plan to manage important daily activities with tools, aides, training and therapy, patients felt empowered to adjust to visual challenges and maintain a high quality of life.

Since 1998, the fledgling vision rehabilitation program evolved into what has become the most physician-requested vision rehabilitation referral program in the Pacific Northwest. In addition to Dr. Boyer, the center has expanded to include Alan Labrum, O.D., Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology,

continued



CASEY EYE
Institute

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and Kathryn Marxen-Simonson, MSOT, OTR/L, CLVT, Vision Rehabilitation Occupational Therapist/Certified Low Vision Therapist. Together, these providers offer vital vision rehabilitation occupational therapy services along with the original clinical rehabilitative ophthalmic and medical care.

In the early 2000's, the program received a generous contribution from Evelyn L. Jones. This allowed the Vision Rehabilitation Center to include additional services for underserved communities and educational programming.

The first 25 years of the Vision Rehabilitation Center has proven that vision rehabilitation services are clinically effective, add value to patients' quality of life, are effective in collaborating with referring providers, and can provide needed services and education in our region. With this center of excellence well established, we look forward to the next 25 years of growth and service helping people live well with vision loss.



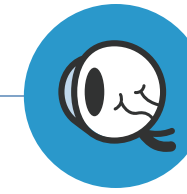
Above: John Boyer, O.D. Below: Kathryn Marxen-Simonson, MSOT, OTR/L, CLVT (right).



President Biden Honors Dr. David Huang

Congratulations to David Huang, M.D., Ph.D., Wold Family Chair in Ophthalmic Imaging, who recently received two of the nation's highest scientific awards for co-inventing the imaging technology called optical coherence tomography, or OCT. In September, Huang and his OCT co-inventors were awarded the 2023 Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award, which is the United States' most distinguished biomedical research award. In October, Huang and his colleagues were awarded the National Medal of Technology and Innovation by President Biden, which is the nation's highest honor for Technological achievement.

OCT is now also used to diagnose and treat conditions of the eye, heart, brain, skin and more. Huang is the director of research, associate director and Wold Family Endowed Chair in Ophthalmic Imaging at the OHSU Casey Eye Institute, as well as professor of ophthalmology and biomedical engineering in the OHSU School of Medicine.



RESEARCH AT THE WOLD FAMILY MACULAR DEGENERATION CENTER

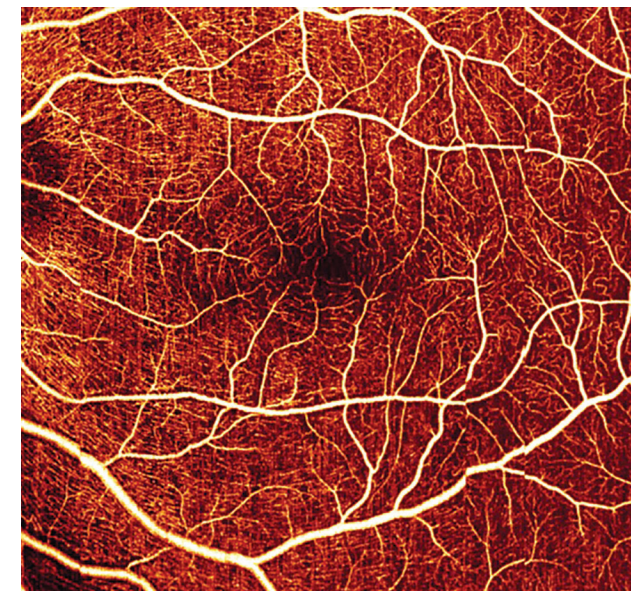
OCT Angiography advancing early diagnosis and treatment of AMD

It is critical to have meaningful and reliable ways to identify eyes at risk for developing vision loss from advanced age-related macular degeneration (AMD). This is especially important if people get treatment before they start to lose their vision, because it's more difficult to follow and treat this disease if there are no symptoms to measure.

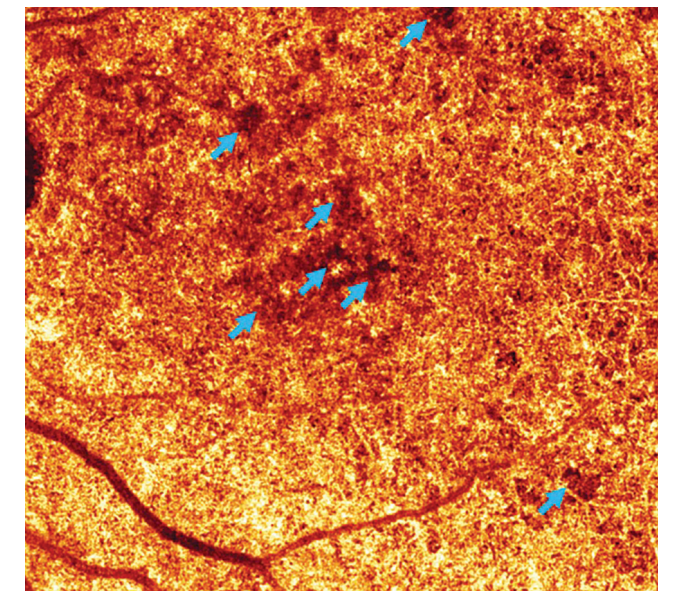
A research team led by Casey Eye Institute's Yali Jia, Ph.D., and Steven Bailey, M.D., received a four-year grant from the National Eye

Institute to improve a new optical coherence tomography angiography (OCTA) prototype in Dr. Jia's lab. OCTA is a safe, non-invasive way to take pictures of the eye's blood vessels, which are affected by AMD.

Advancing OCTA technology to take more detailed images of the eye's circulatory system than ever before could help with identifying people at high risk of developing AMD, earlier diagnosis, and better treatment decisions.



Retinal capillaries



Choriocapillaris

Above: A state-of-the-art imaging prototype using optical coherence tomography angiography reveals normal retinal capillaries and choriocapillaris defect (blue arrows) in an eye with dry AMD. The unprecedented capillary details captured with this imaging technology will be very useful to discover the role of choriocapillaris in AMD.

Clinical trials for AMD at Casey Eye Institute

HONU: An observational study of progression of intermediate dry AMD (Drusen)

The purpose of this study is to follow the natural history of the progression of intermediate AMD and identify genetic biomarkers for disease. There is no treatment provided as part of this study. Participants will come to Portland every 12 weeks for about three years for a total of 13 scheduled visits. All transportation arrangements and cost will be covered by the study. They will receive study specific vision testing, imaging and laboratory testing at no cost. Participants must be over the age of 50, and cannot have diabetes or glaucoma.

PI: Steven Bailey, M.D.

PHOENIX: A study to determine safety and effectiveness of Tinzarebant on dry AMD

The purpose of this study is to determine whether Tinzarebant can slow or prevent Geographic Atrophy (advanced Dry AMD) in people who already have some Geographic Atrophy. All patients who enter the study will be randomized to receive either Tinzarebant or

placebo and will be followed at the Casey Eye Institute in Portland every 3 months for 2 years. Study subjects will receive study specific vision testing, ECG, imaging, exams, and laboratory testing at no cost. Study subjects will receive \$100 stipends after each study visit and will be eligible for travel assistance if needed.

PI: Merina Thomas, M.D.

Contact: Jennifer "Scottie" Maykoski
503-494-3064.

PARASOL: A study to evaluate safety and effectiveness of gene therapy treatment for dry AMD

This is a study in participants 60 years of age or older with GA secondary to AMD conducted to evaluate the efficacy and safety of a single intravitreal injection in the study eye of the gene therapy vector JNJ-81201887 (AAV2CAGsCD59) after 18 months. The JNJ-81201887 gene therapy will be administered to a single eye for each participant.

PI: Christina Flaxel, M.D.

New drugs available to treat AMD

Dry AMD treatments

Izervay and Syfovre | FDA approved

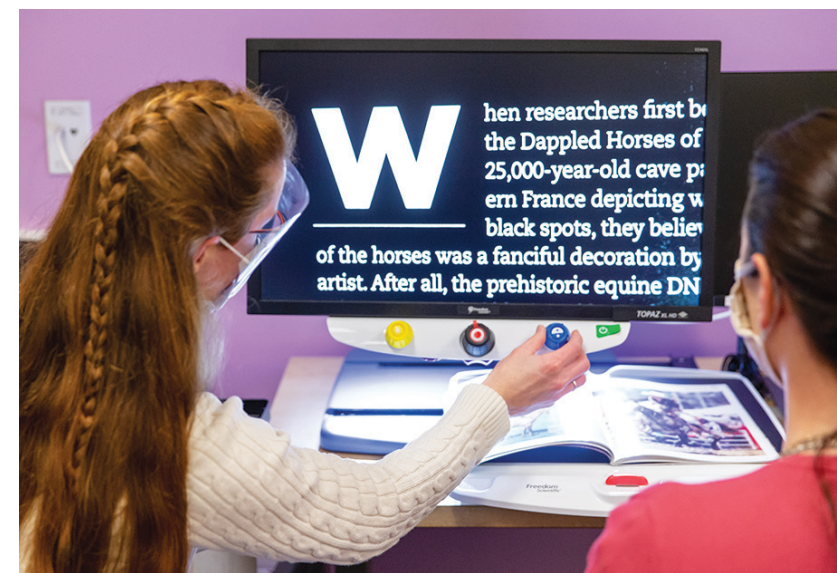
Izervay and Syfovre have been shown to have a modest but significant effect on slowing down the progression of an advanced form of dry AMD. Unfortunately, studies have not been able to show that people who received this treatment were able to keep their vision or were able to read, and some people receiving injections have had serious complications. More

time is needed to learn if there are Dry AMD patients who can benefit from these treatments in a meaningful way.

Wet AMD treatments

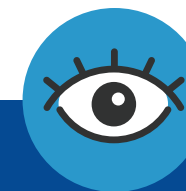
EYLEA HD (high dose) | FDA approved

EYLEA HD (high dose) may improve vision for people with Wet AMD and may allow for more time between treatments.



Tips, tricks and resources for living with low vision

- **Lighting!** Incorporating properly positioned task lighting will help increase contrast and make near tasks easier to see. Position the light on the side of your better seeing eye, if applicable, and between your eyes and the task.
- **Increase contrast whenever possible.** Make items stand out from the background. Some examples include black felt tip pen on white paper or white flour in a black measuring cup, or using a contrasting cutting board from the food you are preparing.
- **A great resource** for learning all about tips and tricks for living with vision loss is www.hadley.edu. Be sure to create a free account on their website to access the full length videos.
- **There are lots of adaptive tools** that can be used to assist with tasks around the house and in the community such as a liquid level indicator for pouring drinks, bump dots for tactile markings on appliances, and large print kitchen tools.
- **When glasses no longer help for seeing close up,** magnification can help. There are several different types of magnifiers one can use such as an optical hand-held magnifier, portable electronic magnifier, or a desktop CCTV. Connecting with your local low vision specialist can help you determine what is the best tool for you to be able to continue to do the reading that is important to you.



Join the Vision Loss Support Group!

The Vision Loss Support Group is held every third Wednesday of the month from 1-2:15 pm, virtually. It is for patients who are experiencing changes to their vision, vision loss or low vision and want to receive additional support and information. Supported by a licensed social worker, the support group is a great place to:

- Connect with others experiencing similar challenges
- Learn about adaptive skills to manage the impact of changes in vision
- Share your personal story and strategies for dealing with vision loss and changes to vision
- Learn about helpful tools, resources and tips to live life to the fullest from professionals from Casey and the community

Wish to learn more?

Contact Tara Albury, MSW, LCSW, at 503-730-5550 or Katie Keim, MSW, LCSW, at 971-442-7219.

Remembering North Bend Ophthalmologist John Flaxel, MD

John Flaxel, MD, (1936 – 2023) of North Bend was a beloved community eye doctor widely admired by his colleagues up on Marquam Hill.

“All of us at Casey shared patients with him,” said long-time friend and colleague Michael Klein, MD, director emeritus of the Wold Family Macular Degeneration Center. “When he sent patients up to us, you knew they had been in great hands – his diagnosis and judgement were never in question. His patients always had great confidence in him, too.”

Dr. Flaxel cared deeply about community health and was a consistent volunteer on the Casey Community Outreach Program’s mobile clinic. He was also passionate about training a new generation of health care providers.

“When Dr. Flaxel retired from clinical practice he immediately reached out to me to ask if he could help train our residents at the Veteran’s Medical Center. With his experience and his calm and kind demeanor he rapidly became a favorite of the residents and of mine. He had an incredible knack for solving difficult surgical problems in elegantly simple ways that the residents could learn from,” remembered Eric Suhler, MD, MPH, professor of ophthalmology and public health and chief of ophthalmology at the Portland Veterans Administration Medical Center.

Flaxel graduated in 1954 from North Bend High School as Valedictorian and Senior Class President, a role he diligently served until the end, organizing and attending their 69th Class Reunion on September 15, 2023. He met and married his wife Joy in 1962, and together they would go on to raise a family of six.

After graduating from medical school at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) in 1963, he completed a one-year Master’s in Pathology. He completed a three-year internship at Chicago Medical School before being called to serve two years as a medical doctor in the U.S. Army at Fort Moore (formerly Fort Benning), Georgia. From there, he returned to Portland, where he completed his residency in Ophthalmology at OHSU and served one year on the OHSU Staff.



Flaxel launched the Bay Eye Clinic and Optical Lab in North Bend in 1970, and it soon grew into one of the top ophthalmology practices in Oregon. Committed to community health, Flaxel led numerous medical missions to Ecuador, where he performed free eye surgeries and supported local orphanages. He was an active and proud Bay Area Rotary and Lions Club member. Locally, he co-founded and supported the Lions Annual Eye Care Program, providing free eye exams to Coos and Curry County schoolchildren. He was also an active member of the medical community, serving as president of the Southwestern Oregon Medical Society, president of Oregon Academy of Ophthalmology, Chief of Surgery at Bay Area Hospital. Dr. Flaxel and his wife Joy were also members of the Macular Degeneration Center’s Community Advisory Board at Casey Eye Institute for many years.

“All of us at Casey shared patients with him. When he sent patients up to us, you knew they had been in great hands – his diagnosis and judgement were never in question. His patients always had great confidence in him, too.”

– **Michael Klein, MD,**
director emeritus of the **Wold Family Macular Degeneration Center.**

Eldest daughter Christina Flaxel, MD, followed in his footsteps, establishing a career as a leading ophthalmologist and researcher at the Casey Eye Institute. In 2016 she was named the Bula Buck Arveson and Charles C. Arveson Professor of Macular Degeneration Research and became the director of the Wold Family Macular Degeneration Center, taking up where Dr. Klein left off.

“John Flaxel was very accomplished, and could have practiced anywhere, but he chose to care for the community where he was raised: North Bend,” said Klein. “He was very happy to stay where he was, and that meant the people of North Bend had a world-class ophthalmologist.”





Wold Family Macular Degeneration Center
 515 S.W. Campus Dr.
 Portland, OR 97239

**Wold Family Macular
 Degeneration Center
 OHSU Casey Eye Institute**
 515 S.W. Campus Dr.
 Portland, OR 97034
 503-494-3537
www.ohsu.edu/amd

Faculty and Staff

Christina Flaxel, M.D., Director
 Steven Bailey, M.D.
 Kavita Bhavsar, M.D.
 John Boyer, O.D.
 J. Peter Campbell, M.D.
 Lesley Everett, M.D.
 Ambar Faridi, M.D.
 Shelley Hanel
 David Huang, M.D., Ph.D.
 Malisa Hughes
 Thomas Hwang, M.D.
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