

The Georgia Society of Ophthalmology Eye Openers

April 2016

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Editorial



To me, the idea of flying to Washington, D.C. to meet with members of Congress sounded about as fun as going to the dentist—painful but necessary. Now that I've had the chance to go, however, I can say not only was it painless, it was rather quite enjoyable.

This overnight fly-in trip was part of AAO's 2016 Mid-Year Forum: an annual advocacy event that focuses on the critical issues facing ophthalmology. The weather was absolutely gorgeous and some sight-seeing was in order. The Capitol building was covered in scaffolding due to renovations that are to be completed by the time our next President is sworn in. (Did you know the dome is made

of cast iron? Apparently, cast iron is too rigid and prone to cracking—a better material for cooking than roofing, it seems.)

I learned several things on this trip. First, meeting with our members of Congress from Georgia is predicated upon the imbibing of drink and the ingestion of food. Second, the legislators universally seemed to be aware of and concerned about health care and the need for change. Third, congressional assistants and staffers are very important people and in some ways just as influential as the legislators themselves. Fourth, very little can be accomplished during an election year with an out-going president—welcome to our government.

We met with a handful of legislators who shared their perspectives and visions for healthcare, including [Senator Johnny Isakson](#) and Congressmen [Tom Price](#), [Rick Allen](#), [Austin Scott](#), [Barry Loudermilk](#), and [David Scott](#). Our society president, **Dr. McGregor Lott**, did an excellent job of sharing our collective concerns regarding current legislation as delineated by the AAO talking points, which you can find [here](#) or by downloading the [AAO Advocacy App](#).

For those of you on-the-fence as to whether you should go on a GSO D.C. fly-in, let me help. You may be wondering, "*Does this really make a difference?*" The GSO fly-in is a unique opportunity and can act as a catalyst for anyone who wants to get more involved with advocacy. I never considered myself politically inclined, but someone once told me that if we don't get involved, then we won't have a voice at the table. With all of the outside pressures and challenges facing our profession—from declining reimbursement to increasing regulatory burdens—we need to get in the game and engage. It will take all of our efforts to make a difference.

Brian Kim, MD

GSO President-Elect
Eye Openers Editor

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On behalf of the entire Georgia Society of Ophthalmology, thank you to the members who attended this year's legislative fly-in trip to our nation's capitol on April 13th & 14th:

David Bogorad, MD
S. William Clark, MD
Bret Crumpton, DO
David Gay, MD
Jeremy Jones, MD
Sohail Khan, MD



D. Brian Kim, MD
Josh Levinson, MD
McGregor Lott, MD
Purnima Patel, MD
Azam Quereshi, MD
Verdana Reddy, MD

We encourage all of our members to talk with the attendees about their experience on the fly-in and what they learned about in-person advocacy, but here is a brief trip report of where they went, whom they met with, and what they

talked about.

After arriving Wednesday night, the GSO delegation had dinner at Johnny's Half Shell, a D.C. seafood staple with scenic views of the Hill. They were joined by several of Georgia's representatives, including Congressmen Austin Scott, Rick Allen, Barry Loudermilk, and Buddy Carter. Dinner was followed by breakfast Thursday morning with Congressman Tom Price at the legendary Capitol Hill Club.



Later in the morning they met with Senator Johnny Isakson and Senator David Perdue's health policy aide for a long discussion about a proposed drug-payment plan for Medicare Part-B and **TECS**, a new program currently being implemented at the Atlanta VA Medical Center. **TECS** (Technology-based Eye Care Services) leverages telemedicine for retinal screening of diabetic eye disease. It doesn't take the place of an eye examination by a doctor, but it does dramatically increase access for thousands of veterans who would otherwise lack eye care. In addition, **TECS** is an integrative model that is simultaneously building and expanding the VA's electronic health records database. We are excited by the success of this program, and we formally invited Senator Johnny Isakson and Representative David Scott to join members of GSO leadership on a site-visit to the Atlanta VA this summer to see TECS in action.

Taking advantage of some free time before their next meeting, the GSO group stopped by the Natural History Museum and the Library of Congress. Of course, they made sure to continue the treasured GSO tradition of posing for a photograph with the statue of Crawford Long, the father of surgical anesthesia (pictured). They then lunched with Congressman David Scott at Bullfeathers, a DC-insider favorite, where TECS was again the main topic of conversation. And the trip ended with a private tour of the capitol and gallery passes to the House of Representatives, arranged by Representative Scott's office. These members represented and advocated for our organization wonderfully.

Face-to-face interaction with legislators is one of the most effective ways to get one's voice heard, and they shared with lawmakers what matters to Georgia's ophthalmologists, our practices, and our patients. We hope to have even more members join next year's legislative fly-in! The more advocates we have the more we can achieve for the ophthalmologic profession.



Check Out the GSO Classified Ads Page

In the market for a new employee? Maybe you are looking to rent some new office space?

As a benefit of membership, GSO members can post job listings and/or classifieds on ga-eyemds.org.

Each Classified Ad is posted on the GSO website for thirty (30) days. Click [here](#) to place your ad today.

*"One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors."
--Plato*

GSO Legal Defense Fund - Pledge Your Support Today



As practicing physicians in today's healthcare environment, the crises we face are many. Threats from the courts, regulatory agencies, and legislative bodies loom on the horizon—jeopardizing our freedom to practice ophthalmology in the best interests of our patients. **We must preserve and protect this freedom.**

GSO's well-established and influential political action committee, Georgia Medical Eye PAC, has been representing our membership under the Gold Dome for over a decade. Early in 2016, your GSO Council recognized that the ophthalmologic profession requires advocacy in an additional arena: the courts. In response to this need, the GSO Council created the Legal Defense Fund. By establishing and maintaining a sizable defense fund, GSO can be ready and able to mount a vigorous, instant defense as attacks upon the interests of all of us arise.

The Mission

The GSO Legal Defense Fund is a rainy day fund dedicated to defending the practice of ophthalmology wherever legal issues arise: in the courts, state agencies, or in the legislative branch. Setting a four-year goal of \$200,000, the Society has seeded the Fund with an initial grant of \$50,000, and has pledged an additional \$10,000 to be given annually from the budget.

Contributions from GSO members like you will make up the difference.

A New Resistance

When Georgia's eye patients undergo delicate sight-saving procedures, GSO is determined they will be performed by expertly trained ophthalmologic surgeons. As eye care technology continues to advance and adversaries seek to expand into the surgical realm, **costly legal battles are imminent**. Your contributions to this fund will help GSO defend against intrusion from litigious outsiders who want to usurp your authority and expertise by legally challenging the current boundaries of surgical scope and treatment of eye disease.

A United Front

Together, GSO members can fight to guarantee the highest quality standards of treatment in Georgia. For our inaugural year, our goal is to collect \$50,000 in member contributions, and we hope that each GSO member will join in and contribute. The more supporters we have, the more united our front—and the more united our front, the more effective our fight.

"...participation by 100% of the GSO membership will be necessary to preserve and protect our profession in Georgia for the foreseeable future."

MICHAEL JACOBS, MD

**Many of your colleagues have already
donated to the Legal Defense Fund--**

**Contribute to the LDF today and show your support for the
future of ophthalmology.**

GSO's 2016 Annual Meeting

July 22 through July 24

Nestled between Calibogue Cay and the Atlantic Ocean on Hilton Head Island, the Sea Pines Resort is located in the convivial vacation community of Harbour Town. This perennially popular destination features more than 400 private rental homes and condos, making it the perfect place for a family getaway.

Registration Now Open

July 22-24 at the Sea Pines Resort on Hilton Head Island



The Sea Pines Resort boasts a diverse array of amenities and is surrounded by an abundance of eateries (from casual dining to fine), boutiques, and shops. With a plethora of recreational activities offered in and around the resort, there's something for everyone at Sea Pines. Parents can sip daiquiris while lounging next to the new Inn Pool, or hit the links at the recently-renovated championship golf course Heron Point -- ranked No. 11 in GOLF Magazine's 2014 "Best Courses Near You." If the outdoors isn't exactly your métier, relax in the Sea Pines Beach Club or stop by the

new and improved Plantation Golf Club and work on your swing using the Golf Learning Center's state-of-the-art technology.

Your younger ones will love playing on the five miles of Atlantic Ocean beach and exploring Seaside's natural "backyard" on one of the Resort's exciting seasonal eco-adventures, like the Alligator and Wildlife Boat Tour. The historic Harbour Town Lighthouse is perfect for snapping some scenic family selfies. Plus, with the newly-enhanced Champions Ballroom in the Clubhouse Conference Center, even your CME events will feel posher than the average meeting. Go ahead and make it a holiday for the whole family!

We Want to Hear From You!

If you are interested in contributing to the next edition of the newsletter (i.e. any information you would like to share, honors, awards, promotions, authorship, or other news of interest) simply send your submission (or submission idea) to: sally@ga-eyemds.org

Eye Openers is GSO's members-only newsletter that focuses on current issues in ophthalmology, member news, association news and updates, legislative issues, practice management, and other subjects of interest to Georgia ophthalmologists.

The GSO does not necessarily endorse the opinions or statements contained in articles or editorials published in *Eye Openers*.

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Confirmed Speakers & Topics:

Jeffrey A. Kammer, MD

Associate Professor of Ophthalmology, Vanderbilt Eye Institute

- Cosmetic and Refractive Considerations in the Glaucoma Patient
- Clinical Applications for Imaging in the Management of Glaucoma Patients
- Baby Boomers, Millennials and the Evolution of Glaucoma Surgery

Sanjay V. Patel, MD

Chair, Department of Ophthalmology, The Mayo Clinic

- Corneal Pitfalls in Cataract Surgery
- Scleral Lenses for Corneal Diseases
- Cataract Surgery in Retinal Disease

George Williams, MD

Chief of Ophthalmology, Oakland University
Beaumont School of Medicine
Associated Retinal Consultants, PC

- 2016 Thomas M. Aaberg Lecture: Healthcare Reform: Dollars and Sense
- IRIS: The Power of Big Data
- The Economics and Epidemiology of Intravitreal Injections



Call 1-866-561-8802 to make a reservation for the Inn and Club at Harbour Town or Sea Pines Premier Villas. Discounted rooms at the Inn at Harbour Town begin at \$324/night. Discounted rooms will be available until Friday, June 10th or until block is sold out.

Register online at www.ga-eyemds.org to reserve your spot today and start looking forward to summer!

A Focus On Ocular Syphilis



In 2001, syphilis was at an all-time low in the United States, but has seen a steady rise ever since. Starting in 2002, Georgia has been one of the top three states in the nation for primary and secondary syphilis case rates (*CDC STD Annual Surveillance*

Reports). Syphilis has more mild symptoms in the earlier stages of the disease: a painless chancre/lesion at the site of infection during the primary stage and symptoms such as a rash or alopecia in the secondary stage. It was believed that if left untreated the disease would progress to early latent and late latent stages—causing neurological system symptoms such as vision loss, dementia, and/or balance problems. Multiple U.S. states have recently reported an increase in ocular syphilis and have seen patients experiencing every stage of syphilis, including primary and secondary. Better data is required to determine if the bacterium has changed and is more likely to target the eyes, or if the recent increase in reporting is due to increased awareness by the medical community.

"Multiple U.S. states have recently reported an increase in ocular syphilis at every stage...**public health relies heavily on private eye care providers** to provide diagnoses and expert information on the disease course, so we appreciate your assistance with this issue."

--Katie Moore,
STD Epidemiologist

All syphilis cases should be reported to local health departments or the Georgia Department of Public Health, but Georgia is making a special effort to find out more details about ocular syphilis cases. We use the information to fill out a case report form for the CDC and to monitor trends in Georgia. Ocular syphilis cases are referred to ophthalmologists before and after the syphilis diagnosis is known, and we want to increase awareness about syphilis so it can be included in differential diagnoses and cases can be reported to Public Health. Public Health relies heavily on private providers to provide diagnoses and expert information on the disease course, so we appreciate your assistance with this issue.

To report a case, or if you have any questions, contact your local health department or Katie Moore, STD Epidemiologist, at 404-657-6338 or Katie.Moore@dph.ga.gov.

Helpful resources if you would like to learn more:

- [CDC Clinical Advisory on Ocular Syphilis](#)
- [CDC 2015 STD Treatment Guidelines](#)
- [CDC STD Surveillance Report for Syphilis in 2014](#)
- [Georgia Department of Public Health Information on Reporting Notifiable Diseases](#)
- [CDC MMWR Article](#) (Summarizing the first cluster of ocular syphilis cases identified recently)

Member News

The Georgia Society of Ophthalmology mourns the loss of two treasured members this past year:



Paul Thomas Manchester Jr., MD
Past-President, 1986-1987



Scott Allan Pastor, MD
GSO Member, 1997-2015

Welcome New GSO Members

Osemelu Aburime

MCG Resident
Mableton

Scotty Gadlin, MD

Athens Eye Associates
Watkinsville

Steven Glenn, MD

MCG Resident
Augusta

Sohail Khan, MD

Augusta Retina Consultants
Augusta

Danlin Mao, MD

MCG Resident
Augusta

Vandana Reddy, MD

Atlanta

Namita Sagar, MD

Georgia Eye Specialists
Marietta

Shivani Sethi, MD

Eye Consultants of Atlanta
Marietta

Harpreet Walia, MD

Georgia Retina
Atlanta

Michael Willman, DO

Carlin Vision
Snellville

David Chin Yee, MD

Georgia Retina
Macon