

SHINE *the* LIGHT

IN THIS ISSUE

Story	Pg
Breakthrough therapies	1
Message from the chair	3
Meet our faculty	4
Physician highlight	5
Thank you to our donors	6
Donor spotlight	7
Meet your physician	8
Expansion to Brea	9
Patient spotlight	10

BREAKTHROUGH THERAPIES

Transformational gift from the Brunson Foundation supports vision research

Robert Brunson’s life brimmed with Hollywood glamour. He played bridge with members of Frank Sinatra’s famed Rat Pack, entertained Saudi royals, met reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes and Marilyn Monroe and received federal appointments from President Lyndon B. Johnson. Brunson twice married former actresses, sharing most of his years with Erika Brunson, who became an internationally sought-after interior designer.

Brunson built his extensive Rolodex as an executive for major U.S. corporations, including Singer and General Dynamics. Those connections helped fuel his successful ventures in oil, construction management and eventually fast-food franchises.

Brunson was in his 90s when he lost his vision to age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and glaucoma. Still wearing his impeccably tailored suits and refusing a cane, he commuted from Bel Air to his Century City office for lunches with longtime business partner and

friend Jim DeBoard. In later years, the two discussed football bets and the future of Brunson’s estate. Erika Brunson, who died in 2022, had donated millions to animal advocacy groups during her life. Her husband, however, wanted to make a lasting impact on people’s lives.

Before he died in 2023 at the age of 101, Brunson put Jim and his wife, Cindy DeBoard, in charge of managing his legacy. This year, the Brunson Foundation made a \$15 million gift to support the Center for Translational Vision Research at UC Irvine’s Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. The center has been named in Robert Brunson’s honor.

“After watching Bob suffer the debilitating effects of macular degeneration and glaucoma, this felt like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to honor him,” says Jim DeBoard. “He wanted to help others, and vision research at UC Irvine seemed like a perfect way to do so.”



Jim and Cindy DeBoard

Future research

The Brunson Center for Translational Vision Research is dedicated to seeking cures to diseases such as AMD, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma — three of the most devastating blinding diseases worldwide. The center recently moved into the new Falling Leaves Foundation Medical Innovation Building, which houses 100 scientists pursuing “bench-to-bedside” research. On the building’s top floor, a 30,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art lab space dedicated to vision research and designed to foster collaborative breakthroughs to cure blindness, will also bear Brunson’s name.

“We are deeply grateful for the Brunson Foundation’s gift to support both the new laboratory and the scientists whose pioneering research seeks cures to prevent and treat blindness,” says Baruch Kuppermann, MD, PhD, Steinert Endowed Professor and chair of the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. “This gift creates a lasting legacy, not only for Mr. Brunson but also for future generations whose sight may be saved by innovative new treatments.”

Eleven ophthalmology researchers already have moved into the lab space, with several more to be hired. Kuppermann’s commitment to finding the best talent resonates with DeBoard.

“I tell everybody who has ever worked for me that you have a much better chance at success if you hire and work with good people,” says DeBoard. “Not only are

we supporting really great people here at UC Irvine, we also want them to be able to bring in more scientists to help cure the types of eye diseases Bob suffered with.”

Faithful friend

DeBoard, a certified public accountant specializing in the oil and gas industries, met Brunson in 1982, when he was recruited for a joint business venture. With the country facing an energy recession in the early 1980s, Brunson and DeBoard shifted to other industries, including construction and racehorses. Their most successful pursuit turned out to be fast-food franchises. The pair purchased their first Taco Bell in 1986 and ultimately expanded to 45 locations.

The Brunsons had no children together, but grew close to Cindy and Jim DeBoard over the years. When Erika Brunson’s interior design firm gained international acclaim, she generously redecorated the DeBoards’ home. The DeBoards were also drawn into the Brunsons’ high-powered circle of connections, including members of Saudi Arabia’s royal family, renowned thoroughbred breeders and musicians, including Jermaine Jackson of The Jackson 5.

DeBoard has continued business pursuits with his son, but he also looks forward to carrying out his friend’s vision for helping others.

“After spending 40 years helping our businesses succeed together, now I get to give away some of that money to benefit others,” says DeBoard. “It’s an honor to have that opportunity.”

Honoring the past, looking toward the future

What an exciting year 2025 has been for the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute, as we marked the half-century anniversary of the ophthalmology department at UC Irvine and the 60th year of our university!

Topping off a truly remarkable year, we received a transformative \$15 million gift from the Brunson Foundation to support our Center for Translational Vision Research, which is dedicated to finding treatments and cures for blinding diseases.

In May, the Falling Leaves Foundation Medical Innovation Building officially opened adjacent to the eye institute on the Irvine campus. On its top floor, 30,000 square feet of state-of-the-art lab and office space is the new home of the translational vision research center and our Program in Precision Genome Editing, both under the leadership of Krzysztof Palczewski, PhD, the Irving H. Leopold Chair of Ophthalmology and Distinguished Professor. In recognition of the Brunson Foundation's incredible generosity, the research center and its new lab and office space will be named in honor of its founder, the late Robert M. Brunson.

In September, we celebrated the Falling Leaves Foundation building's opening with an academic symposium featuring eight speakers, including three Nobel Prize winners. "Breaking Barriers: Trailblazing Innovations in Medical Research," included lectures by Stefan Hell, the 2014 Nobel Laureate in chemistry; Gregg L. Semenza, the 2019 Nobel Laureate in physiology or medicine; and Thomas C. Südhof, the 2013 Nobel Laureate in physiology or medicine. We were honored to host these world-renowned researchers at the event attended by many leaders, physicians and scientists from across the university.

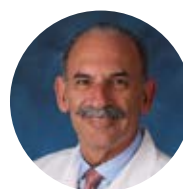
We are continuing to recruit new faculty. We recently made two key hires. Neuro-ophthalmologist Kimberly Gokoffski, MD, PhD, joins us from the Keck School of Medicine at USC. A leading vision scientist, Gokoffski is working on several audacious projects, including one that involves transplants of an entire human eye. We're thrilled to have her treating patients at the eye institute as well as conducting research in the Brunson Center for Translational Vision Research. (Read more about Gokoffski on page 8.)

We also welcomed comprehensive ophthalmologist Farnoosh Tinoosh, MD, who is seeing patients at our new satellite location in Brea. That office — the first of what we expect will be several more locations throughout Orange County — opens its doors this fall. We're excited that he is providing vision services for our patients in North Orange County, along with a number of our ophthalmologists who will be offering care in a variety of subspecialties.

These new clinicians are joining a truly prestigious group of scientists and vision care providers who continue to impress and inspire. Several of them have received major honors this year. I'm proud to share that Annabelle Storch, OD, was named Young Optometrist of the Year — a national distinction awarded annually by the American Optometrist Association to just one U.S. provider. To be nominated, she first won the state of California's Young Optometrist of the Year title. This is a well-deserved recognition of her service to patients at the eye institute, her work with the UCI Health Eye Mobile for Children and to the professional community.

In June, Audrey Lapinaite, PhD, received the Athalie R. Clark Achievement Award for Medical Research, in recognition of the lasting impact of her vision research on human health. It was presented at the annual awards ceremony luncheon hosted by the UC Irvine Research Associates. Also in June, I was humbled to receive the Roger Steinert, MD Legacy Award at Octane OC's Ophthalmology Tech Forum. (Read more about these awards on page 5.)

As we look toward the holiday season and the year's end, I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support and trust of our campus leaders, our faculty members and staff, our community and, most importantly, our patients. Together, our future truly is brilliant.



Baruch D. Kuppermann, MD, PhD

*Director, UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute
Chair, Department of Ophthalmology and
Visual Sciences, UC Irvine School of Medicine*

Our team

Clinical

Cataracts, cornea, external disease and refractive

Soroosh Behshad, MD, MPH

Carol Duong, OD

Marjan Farid, MD

Vice Chair, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Sumit (Sam) Garg, MD

Vice Chair, Clinical Ophthalmology

Sanjay R. Kedhar, MD

Vice Chair, Clinical Research

Olivia Lee, MD

Kailey Marshall, OD

Annabelle Storch, OD

Matthew W. Wade, MD

Comprehensive ophthalmology and cataracts

Alpa Patel, MD

Farnoosh Tinoosh, MD

Glaucoma and cataracts

Austin Fox, MD

Ken Y. Lin, MD, PhD

Director, Medical Education

Sameh Mosaed, MD

Vice Chair, Faculty Development

Andrew Smith, MD

Low vision

Karen Lin, OD

Nilima Tanna, OT

Neuro-ophthalmology

R. Wade Crow, MD

Lilangi Ediriwickrema, MD

Kimberly Gokoffski, MD, PhD

Vivek Patel, MD

Vice Chair, Academic Affairs

Samuel J. Spiegel, MD

Ocular oncology

Kapil Mishra, MD

Oculoplastics

Lilangi Ediriwickrema, MD

Seanna Grob, MD

Jeremiah Tao, MD

Ophthalmic pathology

Maria Del Valle Estopinal, MD

Optometry

Joseph Bui, OD

T. Scott Liegler, OD

Pediatric ophthalmology

Charlotte Gore, MD

Stephen B. Prepas, MD

Annabelle Storch, OD

Donny Suh, MD

Kimberly Walker, OD

Retina and vitreous

Andrew Browne, MD, PhD

Baruch D. Kuppermann, MD, PhD

Chair, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences

Stephanie Y. Lu, MD

Vice Chair, Education

Mitul C. Mehta, MD

Kapil Mishra, MD

Mohammad Riazi, MD

Strabismus

Charlotte Gore, MD

(adults and pediatrics)

Vivek Patel, MD
(adults)

Stephen Prepas, MD
(pediatrics)

Annabelle Storch, OD
(pediatrics)

Donny Suh, MD
(adults and pediatrics)

Kimberly Walker, OD
(pediatrics)

Uveitis

Sanjay R. Kedhar, MD

Olivia Lee, MD

Research

Lbachir Benmohamed, PhD

Andrew Browne, MD, PhD

Rui Chen, PhD

Kimberley Gokoffski, MD, PhD

James V. Jester, PhD

Tibor Juhasz, PhD

Vladimir Kefalov, PhD

Vice Chair, Research

Timothy Kern, PhD

Philip Kiser, PhD

Henry J. Klassen, MD, PhD

Baruch D. Kuppermann, MD, PhD

Audrone Lapinate, PhD

Anthony B. Nesburn, MD

Krzysztof Palczewski, PhD

Director, Brunson Center for Translational Vision Research

Eric Pearlman, PhD

Magdelene Seiler, PhD

Dorota Skowronska-Krawczyk, PhD

Gulab Zode, PhD

Vision clinicians and scientist earn accolades

The clinicians and researchers of the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute and the UC Irvine Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences earned prestigious honors in 2025 for their vision-saving research, patient care and community service.

"These honors, and the many others our faculty so often receive, are a testament to the caliber of our people — the key to our success," says Baruch D. Kuppermann, MD, PhD, the eye institute director and department chair. "I'm continually inspired by our team's tireless pursuit of new treatments and cures for eye diseases, and their impact on patients' lives."



Annabelle Storch, OD, was named 2025's Young Optometrist of the Year by the American Optometric Association (AOA). She was chosen from the country's best of the best — each state association's Young

Optometrist of the Year is nominated but only one is honored with the national distinction. The nominees, all within their first decade of practice, are evaluated based on their service to optometry, service to the visual welfare of the public and service to AOA — an advocacy organization representing more than 50,000 doctors, vision care professionals and students.

Storch is "a dedicated optometrist and educator with a passion for pediatric eye care and advocacy," the AOA announcement read. It noted that in addition to serving patients at the eye institute, she provides pediatric optometry care to Orange County children in need through the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute Eye Mobile for Children. She serves as the president of the Orange County Optometric Society and contributes to the AOA's Telehealth Policy Council and New Technology Committee. She accepted the award at the AOA's annual meeting.



Audrey Lapinaite, PhD, assistant professor of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, received the 2025 Athalie R. Clark Achievement Award for Medical Research. Bestowed annually by UC Irvine Research

Associates, the award honors visionary researchers from the Susan & Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences

whose work has made a lasting impact on human health. Lapinaite, the honoree from the School of Medicine, is a biochemist and core researcher in the Program in Precision Genome Editing. She aims to use gene-editing tools to restore vision loss. Since training with one of the Nobel-winning scientists who discovered the CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing technology, Lapinaite has been working to bring those basic science breakthroughs into clinical practice as sight-saving treatments for patients.

UC Irvine Research Associates, founded by Athalie Richardson Irvine Clarke in 1983, is a group of community members who promote, celebrate and support health sciences studies at the university. The group's lecture series and annual awards ceremony provide an early look at the future of health.



Baruch Kuppermann, MD, PhD, director of the eye institute, received the 2025 Roger Steinert, MD Legacy Award at Octane OC's Ophthalmology Tech Forum in June.

The annual award honors an individual whose contributions have meaningfully advanced the field of ophthalmology — one of the region's thriving medical technology industries. Kuppermann, who holds the Roger F. Steinert, MD, Endowed Chair in Ophthalmology, is a retina specialist who has been at the helm of the institute and the ophthalmology department since 2017.

"Dr. Kuppermann has led with distinction across academic medicine, clinical research and patient care," OCTANE's announcement said. "His work has shaped treatment protocols for retinal diseases, influenced global standards of care and elevated the field through more than 275 peer-reviewed publications and decades of mentorship."

The award was presented by two giants of Orange County's ophthalmology industry: Gavin Herbert, chair emeritus and co-founder of Allergan, and Jim Mazzo, executive chairman of Neurotech Pharmaceuticals Inc. and co-founder of Octane, a convening organization of Southern California tech and medical technology businesses.

Thank you to our donors

We extend our deepest gratitude to our generous supporters — friends, patients, faculty and staff — whose contributions of \$1,000 or more between July 1, 2025 and Aug. 29, 2025, have been vital in advancing our mission. Your support enables us to develop cutting-edge technologies for diagnosing and treating eye diseases, provide patients with world-class medical and surgical care and fund educational programs that train the next generation of ophthalmic leaders.

AbbVie
Kathleen Allen
Nancy and Paul Arentsen
Argyros Family Foundation
Dorothy and Rudolph Baldoni, MD
Jackie Barton, PhD and
Peter Dervan, PhD
Terry Belmont
Annie & Ronald F. Bennett
Family Foundation
Lynn and Dennis Blackburn
Cynthia and William Bone
Wilma and Terry Boyer
Brunson Foundation
Mary Buckingham
Ruth and Robert Burns, MD
Janis and Ed Carpenter
Mary and John Carrington
Esther and James Cavanaugh, PhD
Nancy and Irving Chase
R. Reese and Christopher Leslie
Clemons Family Foundation
Tammi and Bob Cluck
Mary Coates
Carol and Lawrence Cohn
Wendy Hafer Cox and Kevin Cox
Philomena Cullen
Lesly Lane Davenport and
John Davenport
Discovery Eye Foundation
Christine and Roy Dormaier
Doyle Foundation
Lilangi Ediriwickrema, MD,
and Andrew Browne, MD, PhD
Roberta Feuerstein
The Foundation for
Retinal Regeneration
Kelly and Sanford Ganz
Romi and Sam Garg, MD
Kelly and Jasson Gilmore
Glaukos Charitable Foundation
Glaukos Corporation
Francine and Richard Guertin

Pramila Gupta
Carolyn and Richard Helmuth
Kerry and Gavin Herbert
Herbert Family Foundation
Ninetta and Gavin Herbert
Josephine Herbert Gleis Foundation
Carolyn and William Holder
Barbara Holloway
Renee and Peter Horner
Howard and Helen House
Family Foundation
Howard Building Corp.
Pamela and Michael Howard
Peter Hungerford
Jewish Community Foundation
of Orange County
Kristi and Axton Jones
Kaye and Paul Kanan
Maya and Vladimir Kefalov, PhD
Cindi and Steve Kirby
Jan and Barry Kuppermann, MD, PhD
Lamb Family Foundation
Carol and Doron Lean
Lean Engineering
Robin and JK Leason
Olivia Lee, MD
Julie and Gary Lobel
Claudia Looney
Geneva M. Matlock, MD
Mitul and Shilpa Mehta
Medical Foundation
Deanna and Thomas Mitro
Cynthia Mjolsness
Diane and John Murphy
Anthony Nesburn, MD
Jane and Ray Neufeld
Nicholas Endowment
OneOC
Orange County
Community Foundation
Nancy and Larry Pasquali, MD
Yvette Pergola
Elise and Carl Perkins

Kathleen and Stephen Prough
Quality Aspirators Inc.
Fawzia and Ibrahim Ramzy
Penny and William Rauth
Recordati Rare Diseases Group
Barbara Reed
Thomas Roberts
Jennifer and Ernie Romo
Jodi Salerno
Deborah Sassoon, MD,
and Daniel Gil, PhD
Schoellerman Foundation
Katharine and Jack Schoellerman
Mohsen Sharifi
Sandra Shepherd
Myrna and Leonard Simon
Sandi and Ronald Simon
Glenys and James Slavik
Polly and Mike Smith
Staar Surgical
Stanley E. Hanson Foundation
Dea Stanuszek
Marianne Stark
April Steinert
Scott Sussman
Shannon Tarnutzer
Tarsus Pharmaceuticals Inc.
Karen and Rodney Walker
Vivien and Ezzat Wassef, MD
Noly and Ted Wei, MD
Carolyn and Roger Williams
Scott Whitcup, MD
Mindy and Timothy Wood
Jing Yang and Henry Klassen, MD, PhD
YPO Gold Southern California Chapter
Samantha and Scott Zidbeck

To learn how you can support the
Gavin Herbert Eye Institute,
please contact Amber Harness
at aharness@uci.edu.



Dr. Geneva M. Matlock at her San Clemente home.

A century of vision: celebrating Geneva Matlock, MD

Dr. Geneva M. Matlock is so grateful for the sight-saving care she receives for age-related macular degeneration (AMD), she has made it her mission to help others facing the same diagnosis.

This year, the retired anesthesiologist reached two extraordinary milestones. She celebrated her 100th birthday surrounded by more than 100 friends and loved ones at a joyful celebration in San Clemente. She also surpassed the remarkable threshold of \$7 million in giving to the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute.

This type of planned giving provides donors with fixed, lifetime payments in exchange for a future gift to UC Irvine. In the doctor's case, the annuities have allowed her to make generous, ongoing contributions to vision research efforts while giving her the financial security of a dependable income.

Matlock's journey with AMD began about 20 years ago when she noticed something was wrong with her left eye while on a trip to New York City. Accompanied by her late husband, a retired Air Force colonel, she sought care through military medical services in San Diego, where she was diagnosed with AMD.

Eventually, the long drives from Orange County became unsustainable. When Matlock asked military medical

services for a referral closer to home, they directed her to Dr. Baruch Kuppermann, a nationally renowned AMD expert at UCI Health, who has been her ophthalmologist ever since. Years later, she developed the same condition in her right eye, but with Kuppermann's expert care her vision has remained stable.

Today, Matlock continues to live independently and savor the view from her San Clemente home. "I'm able to see the beautiful, wide ocean," she says. It's a simple yet profound reminder of why she supports vision research so passionately.

"We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Matlock," says Kuppermann, director of the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute and chair of the UC Irvine Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences.

"Her generosity, vision and unwavering commitment to helping others make her a true inspiration to our entire community. She embodies the best of what it means to give back — transforming her own experience with macular degeneration into a lasting legacy that will help others see. Her kindness and compassion have strengthened our ability to advance research, care and hope for patients everywhere."

Regenerating nerves to cure blindness



Kimberly Gokoffski, MD, PhD, joined the UC Irvine Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences this summer as an associate professor. She treats patients with neuro-ophthalmic conditions such as ischemic optic neuropathies and strabismus. At the department's Brunson Center for Translational Vision Research, she conducts research that aims to unlock the regenerative potential of the optic nerve. Gokoffski earned her medical and doctoral degrees at the UC Irvine School of Medicine, followed by a residency in ophthalmology at UC Davis and a fellowship in neuro-ophthalmology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

Q. How did you become interested in the optic nerve?

As a second-year medical student at UC Irvine, I encountered a teenager with Parkinson's disease. She underwent stem cell transplantation into her brain that significantly improved her condition, but only temporarily. Still, the experience showed me the power of neural stem cells, so I joined the lab of Anne Calof, PhD, a professor of anatomy & neurobiology, to better understand the potential of stem cell treatments. There I worked on nasal stem cells.

Q. Why did you switch from nose to eye research?

During medical school, we were asked to list specialty rotations we were interested in, and I wrote "anything but ophthalmology." I'll never know whether it was a misunderstanding or if they knew something about me that I didn't yet. While shadowing ophthalmologists, I witnessed patients undergo treatment and be able to see again. It was incredibly inspiring. I asked to meet with Dr. Roger Steinart, then the chair of ophthalmology, to ask if my research on olfactory epithelium would exclude me from consideration for ophthalmology. He was incredibly supportive and actually wrote a letter of recommendation for my ophthalmology residency application.

Q. What brought you back to UC Irvine and the eye institute?

There are so many reasons, but really it's the leadership. Dr. Baruch Kuppermann, the department chair, is an incredibly energetic and thoughtful visionary. Krzysztof Palczewski, PhD, co-director of the Brunson Center for Translational Vision Research, is doggedly determined to do the seemingly impossible: cure blindness. Their generous leadership is refreshing and motivating. With support and mentorship from these giants, I know my research program will reach its full potential.

Q. What optic nerve research most excites you?

Currently, there are no cures for optic nerve diseases like glaucoma. Once damaged, patients are blind forever. I'm collaborating with engineers to study how we can use electric fields to force neurons to regrow and then steer them to specific targets in the brain. This is important because when you regenerate neurons, the connections have to be in the right place or you'll end up with confusion. In the case of vision, this could be likened to seeing the world as a Picasso or Dali painting. We were the first group to show that electric fields can drive regrowth of neurons and restore partial vision after injury in animal models. Now our work is focused on optimizing our approach and translating these findings to patients. I envision a system where a contact lens or surgically implanted electrodes could treat you while you sleep, restoring vision over time.

Q. As a physician, what conditions do you treat?

I treat patients who are experiencing problems with connections between the eye and the brain — either the brain doesn't recognize what the eye is seeing or there's something in the brain that's preventing the eyes from moving in a coordinated fashion. This includes patients suffering from stroke, inflammation or compression of the optic nerve. For example, patients may have double vision resulting from a stroke. I also perform strabismus surgery and optic nerve sheath fenestrations to relieve pressure in the back of the eye in conditions such as idiopathic intracranial hypertension.

Q. What inspires you to pursue patient care and lab research?

The partnership between clinicians and scientists is fundamental to driving translational research, bridging the gap between scientists, engineers and the patient. For me, treating patients motivates my research and it ensures that my lab work is translatable to my clinical practice. Clinician scientists are uniquely able to fast-track research for clinical application because they are experts on what is plausible in the clinic and operating room.



Gavin Herbert Eye Institute expands to Brea

Patients seeking the unsurpassed expertise of UCI Health ophthalmologists can now get their vision care at our new location in North Orange County. The UCI Health — Brea Outpatient Center opens its doors this fall.

“We’re excited to extend the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute’s services beyond our primary locations in Orange and Irvine, giving more patients access to the kind of complex vision care that can only be delivered by academic medicine,” says eye institute Director Baruch Kuppermann, MD, PhD, who is also chair of the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at UC Irvine. “Brea, we hope, will be the first of several satellite locations that expand our reach and accessibility in the community.”

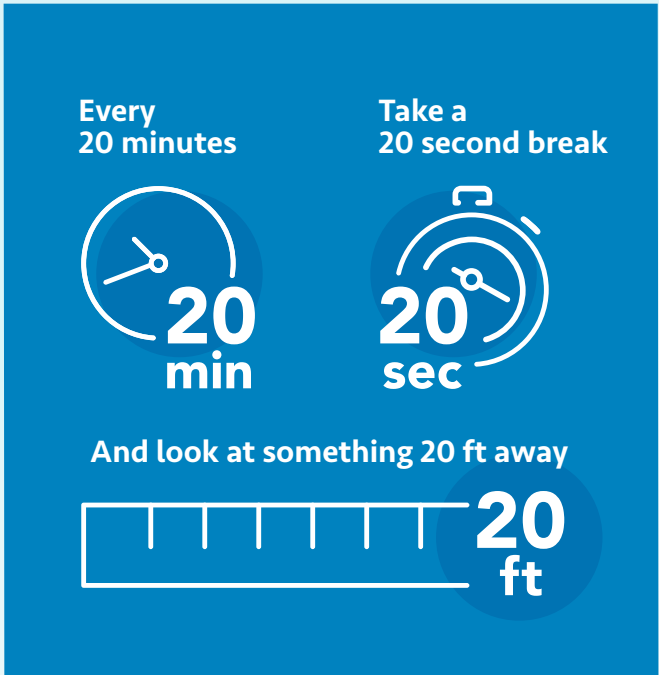
Eye care services in Brea are provided by a rotating team of UCI Health ophthalmologists with various ophthalmic subspecialties. UCI Health ear, nose and throat specialists also will be seeing patients in the clinical facility.

Brea is not the only new location UCI Health eye care services. Earlier this year, the UCI Health Physician Network added SoCal Eye, an ophthalmology practice with offices in Lakewood and Los Alamitos, making it easier than ever to see a UCI Health-affiliated doctor for vision care wherever you are in Orange County.

The UCI Health — Brea Outpatient Center is located at 380 W. Central Ave., Suite 400, Brea, CA 92821. To schedule an appointment, call 949-824-2020.

20-20-20 rule

Dr. Donny Suh, chief of pediatric ophthalmology at the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute, says an easy way to reduce eye strain — for kids and parents alike — is the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look away from the screen and focus on something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.



Eye surgeons restore man's vision after 10-year ordeal



Sergio Reyes outside the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute.

A decade ago, Sergio Reyes had what he believed would be a simple cosmetic eye procedure that left him legally blind and eventually led him to UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute specialists in hopes of regaining his sight.

Reyes was working as a paralegal in Orange County in 2015 when he saw an ad offering iris implants to change eye color. He was told it would be safe, inexpensive and reversible. He traveled to Mexico with a small group of patients and chose an aquamarine shade to complement his olive complexion and dark hair.

Everything was fine at first. But within months of getting the iris implants, Reyes began seeing halos around headlights and street lights while driving at night. His vision got progressively worse until he was no longer able to drive or work.

"It was a big mistake," Reyes says of the iris implant procedure, one that cost him dearly. "I lost my job, my car, my savings, my place, my friends — everything. Only one of my sons stuck with me. He used to drive me around like my chauffeur, but at some point he was frustrated, too."

Over the next few years, Reyes saw a number of ophthalmologists who diagnosed him with cataracts and glaucoma. They suggested that he find a surgeon who would remove the implants. "No one wanted to touch my eyes," he recalls. "They were afraid because I had so many issues."

One doctor finally told him that only ophthalmologists at an academic medical center were equipped to provide the treatment he needed and referred him to the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute. There he found Dr. Olivia Lee and Dr. Sumit Garg, physicians he knew immediately could help him.

"Although they thought my situation was very bad, they were optimistic," says Reyes. "They were very understanding, very compassionate and they helped me a lot."

Between 2018 and 2022, Reyes underwent a series of surgeries at the eye institute to treat the damage caused by the artificial iris implants and the inflammation they triggered. The eye surgeons removed the artificial irises

then surgically implanted glaucoma shunts to reduce the pressure in his eye. They also removed his cataracts.

But Reyes needed new corneas, the transparent protective outer layer of the eye. He had four separate transplants of donor corneas. Each time his vision would improve for a few weeks until the donor corneas failed, leaving him nearly blind once again.

Lee suggested trying an artificial cornea. She is one of the few providers on the West Coast who can implant the Boston Keratoprosthesis. Because artificial corneas require lifelong monitoring for potential complications, it's considered a last resort. In fall 2022, Lee implanted a prosthesis, which restored Reyes' vision in one eye. A few months later, she repeated the procedure on his other eye.

Reyes is not the first patient Lee has treated who suffered serious complications from cosmetic iris implants, which are usually offered only in other countries, and she knows first-hand the risks. The American Academy of Ophthalmology issued a warning against the implants and another eye-color-changing procedure in January 2024. But the procedures continue to gain in popularity.

"This type of cosmetic iris implant causes chronic damage to multiple parts of the eye, requiring the kind of multidisciplinary eye care that we are proud to provide at UC Irvine," she says. "But we never want patients with otherwise healthy eyes to end up needing the level of complex care that Sergio did."

Only one iris implant has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and only for patients whose iris is significantly damaged or missing. It is offered at the eye institute.

Today, Reyes wears contact lenses and uses eye drops daily to maintain the health of his artificial corneas and prevent infection. He says his vision is almost as good as it was a decade ago. He can drive, see movies and visit family and friends. He even hopes to return to paralegal work.

"God put a good doctor in my path," says Reyes, who calls his recovery a miracle. "I call Dr. Lee my angel because she gave me my vision back."

Looking for supplements to help your eyes?

What can you do to protect your vision as you age? "Adding these antioxidants and other beneficial compounds to your daily routine can slow or reverse vision loss over time," says Dr. Baruch Kuppermann, director of the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute. Here's a shopping list of the most essential supplements:

Zinc and copper



Zinc is the most effective ingredient for preventing the progression of age-related eye disease. Take 50–80 mg of zinc daily.

However, since zinc can deplete copper, it is recommended that it be taken with 2 mg of copper.

Lutein and zeaxanthin



Eat your greens! Lutein and zeaxanthin, powerful antioxidants found in dark, leafy vegetables, slowed the progression of macular degeneration in AREDS trials. If you're using supplements, take 6–20 mg daily of a lutein-zeaxanthin supplement (about 2 capsules).

Omega-3 fatty acids



You've heard about the benefits of fish and omega-3 fatty acids to stay healthy.

The same is true for your eyes. Studies show that eating fish two to three times a week can be beneficial. You may also want to consider a daily fish oil supplement.

Vitamins for eye health



Consider taking a vitamin formulated specifically for eye health. Look for a supplement that contains 2 mg of copper to offset depletion from zinc — for example, PreserVision AREDS 2 by Bausch and Lomb.

UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute

850 Health Sciences Road
Irvine, CA 92617

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Santa Ana, CA
Permit No. 1106

VISIT THE OPTICAL SHOP

Call 949-824-7690 to schedule your appointment.

Monday–Friday: 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Closed for lunch: 11:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

Proceeds from our optical shop support sight-saving research and help patients diagnosed with keratoconus pay for specialty lenses not covered by insurance.

EVENTS

2025-2026 community lectures



Registration is easy for these virtual lectures, held from 7 to 8 p.m. Use the QR code to access the registration form or register at: www.ophtalmology.uci.edu/events
Call 949-824-7243 for more information.

Dry eyes

Dec. 2, 2025

What is dry eye and how is it treated?
Olivia Lee, MD

Aging eyes

Jan. 13, 2026

Eyes over time: Recognizing and managing age-related ocular changes
Alpa Patel, MD

Ocular diseases and cataracts

Feb. 10, 2026

How to prepare for cataract surgery when you have other ocular diseases
Soroosh Behshad, MD, MPH;
Kapil Mishra, MD;
Andrew Smith, MD

Diabetes

March 10, 2026

Diabetic eye disease: What it is and how it's treated; dietary management of diabetes
Mitul Mehta, MD; Aditi Thakkar, MD — endocrinology

AMD

April 7, 2026

Age-related macular degeneration: changes in vision and long-term prevention
Andrew Browne, MD, PhD;
Stephanie Lu, MD

Cataracts

May 5, 2026

Taking the stress out of cataract surgery
Matthew Wade, MD

Dry eyes

June 2, 2026

What is dry eye and how is it treated?
Sanjay Kedhar, MD

LASIK surgery seminars

6:30–7:30 p.m.

Feb. 5, 2026
April 9, 2026

Register for all lectures:
ophthalmology.uci.edu/events

For more information:
ophthalmology.uci.edu
949-824-7243

RSVP: 949-824-7243
ophthalmology@hs.uci.edu



Clinical trials

Patients can gain access to innovative care while helping researchers study the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of eye conditions.

To participate in a clinical trial, scan the QR code or email CCREnrollment@hs.uci.edu

CLINIC LOCATIONS

UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute — Irvine

850 Health Sciences Road
Irvine, CA 92617

UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute — Orange

101 The City Drive South, Pavilion 2,
Building 30A
Orange, CA 92868

UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute — Brea Outpatient Center

380 W. Central Ave., Suite 400
Brea, CA 92821

To make an appointment, call 949-824-2020