UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute

SPRING 2026

SHINE *the* LIGHT

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WHOLE-EYE TRANSPLANT

Researchers seek to restore vision with groundbreaking whole-eye transplant

The goal is simple but audacious: to restore vision with a whole eye transplant. Across the country, research teams are racing to make that breakthrough, including scientists with the UC Irvine Brunson Center for Translational Vision Research and the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute.

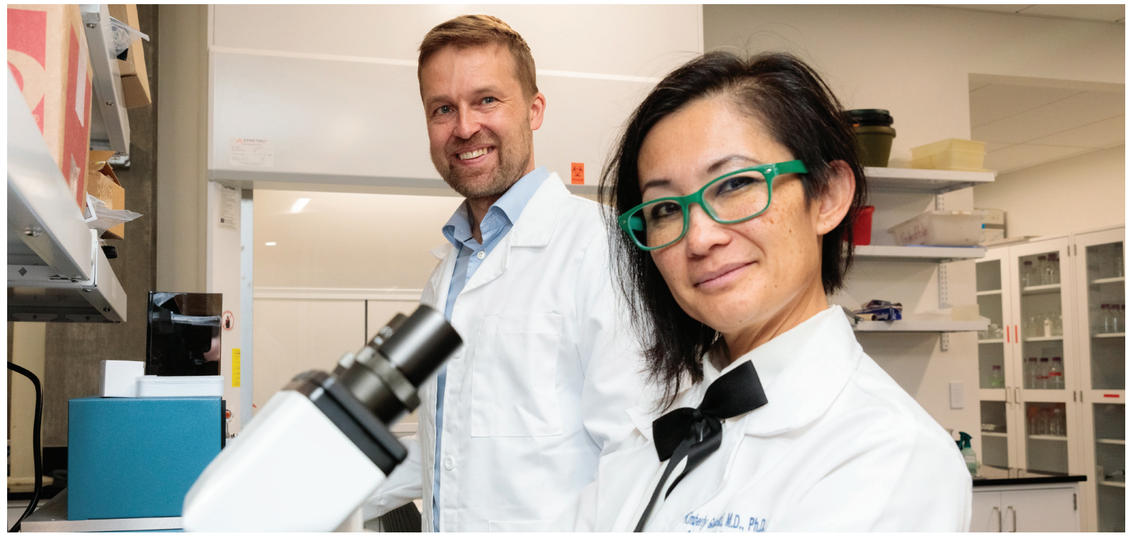
In 2024, the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) committed up to $132 million in federal funds for the Transplantation of Human Eye Allografts (THEA) program, which aims to find a cure for blindness by successfully transplanting a whole, functioning human eye. The agency, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, awarded funds to four consortiums composed of scientists from multiple institutions.

UCI Health neuro-ophthalmologist Kimberly Gokoffski, MD, PhD, is part of the THEA research team based at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus; Frans Vinberg, PhD, a UC Irvine School of Medicine department of ophthalmology and visual sciences faculty member, is part of a team based at Stanford University's Byers Eye Institute.

"Whole-eye transplantation offers the advantage of being able to treat all causes of blindness," says Gokoffski. "But it's also incredibly challenging — some would say impossible."

The first challenge is finding viable human eyes. Gokoffski and Vinberg work with organ donation centers like One Legacy, but healthy donor eyes are rare.

Once they find a usable eye, the organ's light-sensing ability must be preserved long enough to transplant, a period of up to 48 hours. During transplant surgery, they have to restore blood flow to the donor eye from the recipient and reattach more than one million nerves that send messages from the eye to the brain to restore vision. Even if that is successful, doctors then must prevent the body's immune system from attacking the donor eye.



Frans Vinberg, PhD and Kimberly Gokoffshi, MD, PhD

Gokoffski, who joined UCI Health and the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences in 2025, specializes in eye-brain connection disorders, making her ideally suited to tackle the challenges of whole-eye transplant. As leader of a team of five scientific principal investigators /professors, she is involved in nearly every aspect of developing the novel transplant process.

Her team is using unique electrical signals to guide each of the one million optic nerve fibers to connect to a specific receptor in the brain, like inserting tiny plugs into the right socket. Otherwise, visual signals from the retina arrive garbled and out of place, like visual static or perhaps distorted like a Cubist painting.

Gokoffski is working with Dion Khodagholy, PhD, who specializes in bioelectronics at the UC Irvine Samueli School of Engineering, and Gianluca Lazzi, PhD, an expert in biomedical electromagnetics with the Keck School of Medicine at USC. They are developing a sophisticated electrode that would go around the optic nerve and steer nerve growth to the right places in the brain.

"What we're doing is complementary to others who are trying to stimulate growth of the optic nerve," Gokoffski says. "If you can have an external signal that says, 'This is the direction I need you to grow in,' that will be helpful. But it's not going to be enough.

"There will have to be visual rehabilitation to train the brain of the transplant recipient. And that's a big question: Can the brain be trained to work with this new eye?"

Meanwhile, Vinberg, who joined the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute in January, seeks methods to preserve the donor eye's function until it can be transplanted into a recipient. His previous research drew international attention when he proved that light responses — essential for sight — could be revived in donated human eyes.

For a glimpse of what's possible, Vinberg and Gokoffski cite a landmark case in 2023, when New York doctors transplanted half of a face, including an entire eye, for a U.S. military veteran who had been injured in an electrical accident. While his vision was not restored, the eye remained intact, and it is a foundation to build on.

Despite the obstacles, they're enthusiastic about how the THEA program has fueled collaboration across multiple institutions and accelerated the race to cure blindness, making discoveries along the way to improve vision care and neuroscience.

Says Vinberg, "Even before achieving whole-eye transplantation, itself, many things we're learning through the process will help advance all kinds of vision therapies."

This research is funded in part by the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H). The views and conclusions are those of the authors and should not be interpreted to represent official policies, expressed or implied, of the U.S. government.

2026: A transformational year

2026 is shaping up to be another period of remarkable growth for the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute — an auspicious start in keeping with Lunar New Year marking this the year of the Fire Horse, traditionally associated with energy and forward motion.

People remain at the heart of our continued expansion. We plan to hire as many as 10 new doctors and 43 new co-workers over the course of 2026 and 2027. Currently, we are recruiting for retina, cornea and glaucoma specialists, as well as a comprehensive ophthalmologist. We also plan to begin recruiting for more positions in the fall.

Our newest staff physician, Farnoosh Tinoosh, MD, recently joined the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute to provide comprehensive ophthalmology care at the new UCI Health — Brea Outpatient Center, which is now officially open. In addition to comprehensive eye care, all of our specialty ophthalmic services will be available at our Brea location.

Our Irvine location will be expanding soon, too. Ophthalmology has shared the second floor with the UCI Health Dermatology Center. They will be relocating soon to medical offices on Birch Street, near the phenomenal new UCI Health — Irvine medical campus. We expect to begin to occupy the second floor in early 2027.

We are also thrilled by the recent opening of UCI Health — Irvine, a gleaming seven-story hospital at our new medical campus on Jamboree Road. The 144-bed hospital has a 24-hour emergency department with 20 treatment rooms as well as specialty inpatient services for cancer, digestive health, neurology, orthopedics and spine. It is also the new home for Orange County's first adult bone marrow transplant and cellular therapy program.

Beyond being a state-of-the-art medical facility, the hospital is filled with original works from California artists, a meditation garden and private patient rooms equipped with 75-inch smart TVs that allow for medical conferencing and communication with distant family members. Floor-to-ceiling windows feature views of the serene San Joaquin Marsh Reserve.

We are also growing our research team. In January, world-famous retina researcher Frans Vinberg, PhD, joined us from the University of Utah. Both he and Kimberley Gokoffski, MD, PhD, who joined us in 2025, bring with them major grants from the U.S. Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H). Working on different research teams, both are pursuing a daring goal: transplanting a whole human eye. We are incredibly excited — and impressed — that they are conducting this research at our Brunson Center for Translational Vision Research.

A point of pride: Tibor Juhasz, PhD, professor of ophthalmology and visual sciences and biomedical engineering, has been named a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors. Juhasz holds 46 U.S. and international patents. He has earned global acclaim for his contributions to the development of the LASIK procedure, as well as for modern use of the laser for cataract surgery, and, more recently, a laser treatment for glaucoma, which affects nearly 80 million people worldwide. These efforts led to the ViaLase Laser System, a technology that enables a minimally invasive glaucoma procedure often described as "eye surgery without surgery."

In yet another example of translational science striving to improve patients' lives, vision researcher Gulab Zode, PhD, recently won an award from UCI Beall Applied Innovation. The funding will support his efforts to develop proof-of-concept for a new glaucoma treatment using gene-editing tools. Critical data from the project could support patents and partnerships with pharmaceutical companies as well as lead to a potential cure for glaucoma. Zode just received the inaugural Cristina Kenney, MD, PhD, Emergency Funding for Eye Research grant for research to protect vision in glaucoma patients by targeting the mitochondria in retinal nerve cells. The grant continues our late colleague's research into the role dysfunction plays in vision loss.

We are energized by the talent joining our team, the discoveries taking shape in our laboratories and the growing reach of our clinical care. Most of all, we are grateful for the continued loyalty of our patients and community as we work together to save vision and improve lives.

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
Carolyn 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
Karen Lin, 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)
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
Claire Gelfman, PhD
Kimberly Gokoffski, MD, PhD
James V. Jester, PhD
Tibor Juhasz, PhD
Vladimir Kefalov, PhD
Vice Chair, Research
Henry J. Klassen, MD, PhD
Philip Kiser, PhD
Baruch D. Kuppermann, MD, PhD
Audrone Lapinate, PhD
Chang Liu, 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
Frans Vinberg, PhD
Gulab Zode, PhD

Farnoosh Tinoosh, MD, offers comprehensive eye care at new Brea location

We are proud to announce that Dr. Farnoosh Tinoosh, after more than 21 years running a thriving private ophthalmology practice in Orange County, has joined UCI Health to provide high-quality, comprehensive care at the newest Gavin Herbert Eye Institute location in Brea. Tinoosh earned his medical degree at Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit, MI, where he completed a residency at Kresge Eye Institute.

Q. Why did you become an ophthalmologist?

I had good hands and good eyes, and I loved the detail of microsurgery. The eye was as microsurgical as I could get. I have devoted my life to an organ that's just 10 millimeters across!

Q. What is your specialty?

Initially, I concentrated on laser eye surgeries, LASIK and PRK (photorefractive keratectomy). In the heyday of refractive surgery, I was doing up to 5,000 operations each year. After I started my private practice in 2006, I began offering more comprehensive ophthalmology, providing surgery for cataracts, glaucoma and other common eye conditions.

Q. Why did you decide to join the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute?

Any time I had a case that was extremely difficult, I referred my patients to UCI Health ophthalmologists. They always provided excellent care. Over the years, I grew to know these physicians not just as colleagues but as friends. A few of them talked to me about an opportunity to join the eye institute. I knew I would be proud to be part of such a prestigious organization, one with such a strong reputation in the community.

Q. What do you enjoy about treating veterans?

I love our veterans. The sacrifices they have made are incredible and they are a wonderful group of people. My patients had a variety of ophthalmic complaints and diseases, some of which may have been a consequence of their service. I have truly appreciated the opportunity to help them to the best of my ability.

Q. What will be different for your patients at UCI Health?

After 21 years in private practice, our office was like a family; everyone knew your name. Although the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute is a much bigger organization, I want patients to know that everyone here — from the person at the front desk to the technician doing testing, the doctors and staff members — wants to care for them and help them see better. The people are what make us Southern California's best place for eye care, in my opinion.

Q. What excites you about the Brea location?

It's a beautiful new, state-of-the-art eye care center. I'm looking forward to welcoming people to our new office, meeting new patients and building relationships.

Q. When should people consider visiting an ophthalmologist?

People should see an ophthalmologist if they notice any changes in vision, experience eye discomfort, or simply want to maintain healthy vision — especially after age 40. Early evaluation can help detect conditions such as glaucoma, macular degeneration and cataracts before symptoms significantly impact vision.

Q. What keeps you busy and engaged outside the office?

When I'm not seeing patients, my life is my son, high-intensity fitness training and soccer, which I play twice a week.

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 April 9, 2026 have been vital to advancing our mission.

Your support enables us to develop leading-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.

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Carolyn and Roger Williams
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To learn how you can help advance groundbreaking vision research and life-changing patient care at the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute, please contact Amber Harness at aharness@uci.edu

A meaningful space: gift honors celebrated clinician and scientist M. Cristina Kenney, MD, PhD

Dr. Nesburn in front of the Cristina Kenney Conference Center.

The conference center on the top floor of the Falling Leaves Foundation Medical Innovation Building is more than a meeting place. The sunlit space serves as a lasting tribute to a beloved Gavin Herbert Eye Institute ophthalmologist, scientist, mentor, colleague and friend.

The Cristina Kenney Conference Center was recently named in honor of the late UC Irvine physician-scientist following a $500,000 gift from her husband, Anthony Nesburn, MD. Kenney, who passed away in 2023 at the age of 74, was a member of the Brunson Center for Translational Vision Research. The center's state-of-the-art laboratories are located adjacent to the conference center.

The gift ensures Kenney's name and legacy will be familiar to future generations of vision scientists.

"This is a way to recognize her research and her key role in setting our department on the path to earn the world-class reputation it has today," says Nesburn, the eye institute's vice chair for scientific development. "It ensures her name is remembered here at UC Irvine."

They met at a conference where he sought a biochemist specializing in the cornea to help him uncover the root cause of the eye disease called keratoconus. Their personal and professional partnership lasted 35 years.

"We were perfect for each other, and enjoyed everything together," Nesburn said.

In 1990, the power couple was recruited to UC Irvine, where Kenney's research on mitochondria, the energy-producing engine within cells, advanced the development of new therapies for age-related macular degeneration. She was also chief operating officer of the Discovery Eye Foundation, where Nesburn is medical director. The foundation is a major eye institute supporter.

Kenney also founded the institute's Bench-to-Bedside Symposium, a scholarly event now in its 12th year. To further honor her legacy, Nesburn made a lead gift to establish the Cristina M. Kenney Endowed Lectureship. Dozens of colleagues, faculty, friends, patients, and community members also contributed in tribute to the beloved physician-scientist, helping create a lasting legacy that will continue to inspire innovation and collaboration in vision research for generations to come.

"Cris was an extraordinary scientist and a truly remarkable person," says eye institute Director Baruch Kuppermann, MD, PhD. "Working with her for over 20 years, what stood out was how freely she gave her time, intellect and heart. She is deeply missed by all who knew her."

Avid scuba divers and snorkelers, the couple discovered the wonders of the Galapagos Islands, Costa Rica, Antarctica, the Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Sea. Kenney was game to travel anywhere as long as she had Wi-Fi and three hours a day for her research.

"Cris loved working," says Nesburn. "If anyone came to her and asked her for help with anything involving research or mentorship — even if it was not related to ophthalmology. She was always glad to help."

"She worked hard because she believed she was here for a reason."

Researchers who collaborate in the conference center bearing her name are there for the same reason — to improve vision and cure blinding eye diseases.

Author credits eye specialist for lifesaving diagnosis

Janice Munemitsu with Dr. Sanjay Kedhar

Vision and voice are essential to Janice Munemitsu's busy post-retirement career. A sought-after speaker and author, she is frequently tapped to share her family's story, which marks a fascinating chapter in U.S. history.

Munemitsu's family members were among more than 125,000 Japanese Americans forcibly relocated to internment camps during World War II. They had leased their Orange County farm to a local Mexican American family.

While living on the farm, the Mendez family became central figures in the 1947 school desegregation case Mendez v. Westminster, which challenged separate schools for Mexicans and would pave the way for the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision, Brown v. Board of Education.

Munemitsu became the reluctant author of *The Kindness of Color*. Today, she speaks in classrooms, at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles and in communities throughout the region.

Sudden vision loss

But in 2023, Munemitsu experienced a drastic change in her vision over a matter of weeks. She was diagnosed with neurotropic keratitis, a rare disease that damages nerves in the cornea. An eight-week course of treatment, though painful, successfully spurred nerve regrowth, but then she developed a secondary eye condition, uveitis.

At that point, her community ophthalmologist referred her to Dr. Sanjay Kedhar, a specialist in uveitis and other autoimmune and infectious eye diseases at the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute.

"Dr. Kedhar literally saved my life — not just my eyesight," Munemitsu says.

To get to the bottom of her eye problems, Kedhar also ordered a number of lab tests, including a chest X-ray.

"The eyes often provide amazing insight into the general health of our bodies," he explains. "Uveitis is an inflammation of the middle layer of the eye. In about 50% of patients, an underlying systemic disease may be associated with the inflammation. These diseases can include infections, autoimmune diseases and even cancer."

Stunned by diagnosis

In Munemitsu's case, it was lung cancer.

The X-ray revealed a spot on her lung that turned out to be a 2.5-inch tumor caused by an extremely rare form of the disease, RET-positive lung cancer. It accounts for less than 2% of all lung cancers and tends to affect non-smoking women, especially people of Asian descent.

"What I most appreciate is Dr. Kedhar's curiosity. If he had done the blood tests only, everything would have come back as fine," she says. "I'm definitely grateful to him."

Munemitsu, who received lung cancer treatment elsewhere, has regained her stamina and resumed her speaking engagements.

Throughout it all, Kedhar continued to monitor her vision to ensure that the uveitis was under control and that her lung cancer treatments weren't negatively affecting her sight. He even took time to consult with her community eye doctor.

Munemitsu appreciates the high-quality care she received at the eye institute's Irvine location, an easy drive from her Corona del Mar home.

"How fortunate we are to have experts like Dr. Kedhar right here locally," she says.

A mother's lessons endure

Each time they enter the UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute in Irvine, Renee and Peter Horner think about Renee's parents, Anne and William Brownstein. It's not just that the staff often share fond memories of Anne, but also because their names grace the donor wall in the lobby.

The Brownsteins were among the eye institute's earliest supporters and they have left behind a legacy of the power of hard work, the importance of caring for your vision and the joy of giving back.

Entrepreneurs who opened McDonald's franchises across Southern California, the Brownsteins were proud of how each location served as an economic engine for the community. They celebrated alongside employees whose children would go on to earn college degrees and land high-paying jobs. After the Horners and Renee's siblings took charge of the family business, they watched age-related macular degeneration slowly chip away at their mother's sight and her independence.

"My mother used to say losing her vision took her life away," Renee recalls. "If you can't see, how do you take a shower, eat or get around?"

A friend's recommendation

For years, Renee drove her mom to ophthalmologists in Los Angeles as her eyesight gradually declined. But after one especially long day that required two trips to the clinic and an exhausting rush-hour commute, Renee started looking for a doctor closer to home. A friend recommended Dr. Baruch Kuppermann at UC Irvine. The entire family liked him immediately.

"Dr. Kuppermann is wonderful, very personable and charismatic — just like my father," she says. "After seeing what good care my mom was receiving, I switched to ophthalmologists at UC Irvine, too."

Renee has keratoconus, a progressive thinning of the cornea that can cause blurry vision and halos around lights. She receives regular care from cornea specialist Dr. Marjan Farid. Meanwhile, her husband sees Dr. Lilangi Ediriwickrema for periodic testing to ensure that his type 2 diabetes doesn't lead to vision problems.

Renee and Peter Horner

"People don't fully appreciate how important it is to have regular eye exams, especially as you get older," Renee says. "I learned from my parents how important eyes are. Now I try to encourage my friends to get their eyes examined at least once a year."

Giving back like mom

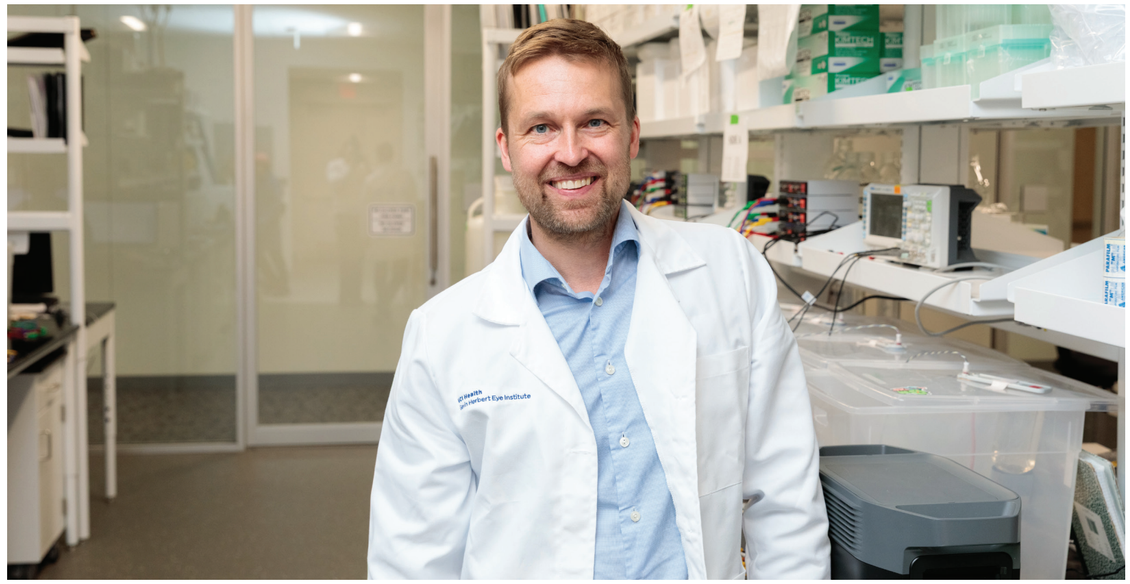
Something else Anne Brownstein instilled in her daughter and son-in-law: the pleasure of attending events and lectures at UC Irvine.

"The phenomenal scientists, doctors and professors they've hired — the research and treatments they've helped develop over the years — are remarkable," says Peter. "If you need anything related to your eyes, and you're anywhere in Southern California or the West Coast even, the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute is the place to be."

He adds: "We are so thoroughly impressed with everything we see that they're doing. It gives us a lot of hope for the future of medicine."

Today, the Horners continue to support UC Irvine. The couple has given generously to the eye institute, the Sue & Bill Gross Stem Cell Research Center and the Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders.

"There is so much wonderful research being done at UC Irvine that is helping so many people," Renee says. "It feels good to be able to be a part of it."



Dr. Frans Vinberg

Renowned retina researcher joins Brunson Center for Translational Vision Research

Internationally recognized retina researcher Frans Vinberg, PhD, has joined the UC Irvine Brunson Center for Translational Vision Research, drawn to the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute's growing reputation and the promise of challenging new research opportunities to cure blindness.

"Not many research institutes have a trajectory like the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute has during the past five years," says Vinberg.

Vinberg's passionate pursuit of vision-saving research stems in part from personal experience. His mother has myopia and glaucoma; his aunt has age-related macular degeneration. They have given him a poignant understanding of how progressive vision loss affects quality of life.

"My motivation is to try to find the cure for blindness," he says. "The retina is one of the most complex parts of the nervous system and damage to it causes most forms of blindness. We have many treatments for the front of the eye, such as cataract surgery or cornea transplants. But we still don't have clinical cures for the back of the eye, the retina."

Vinberg developed an interest in vision science in his native Finland, where he earned a doctorate in biomedical engineering at Aalto University. While researching the biophysics of cell membranes, he recorded the light response from retina tissues in animals. Out of necessity, he and his advisor often built their own research devices — a hands-on approach that later led him to invent and patent new instruments.

In 2016, while at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Vinberg earned a prestigious National Institutes of Health award for promising postdoctoral students transitioning to faculty roles. The grant funded his work recording light responses in the central retina — the region responsible for sharp, detailed vision — but in eyes no longer attached to a living body, a breakthrough in the study of human vision.

In 2022, his groundbreaking paper in Nature showed for the first time that human photoreceptor cells continue to sense light and produce electrical signals, even several hours postmortem, challenging longstanding assumptions about the limits of human retinal tissue.

This research and his related work as a faculty member at the University of Utah, enabled Vinberg to start a company named Eyescreen, Inc. It is developing a platform and assays for preclinical drug testing for ophthalmic diseases using donated human eyes, with funding from the National Science Foundation's Small Business Innovation Research program.

"Animal models do not translate well to the human eye, so it's very important that we have other ways to test delivery, efficacy and even safety of different treatments," he says. "Eyescreen allows researchers and pharmaceutical companies to test drugs and, hopefully, develop new treatments."

Vinberg is currently pursuing opportunities to use the company's platform to test gene-editing therapies to treat blindness that are being developed in the Program for Precision Genome Editing led by Krzysztof Palczewski, MD, PhD, at the Brunson center.

His research spans multiple frontiers in vision restoration, including reversing blindness caused by loss of blood flow to the eye due to blocked arteries or other ischemic injuries. A paper he and University of Utah colleagues published recently in *Science Advances* lays the foundation for preclinical studies to treat central retina artery occlusion, which usually results in blindness.

He is also part of a team of U.S. researchers working across multiple institutions to develop techniques and processes to restore vision through whole-eye transplants, with federal funding from ARPA-H. (See page 1)

Vinberg stresses that none of this work is possible without organ donor societies. He is collaborating with organizations across Southern California to strengthen networks and infrastructure that enable people to donate their eyes after death — an essential step in his efforts to cure blindness.

Reconstructive eye surgeon chosen for elite vision fellowship

The National Eye Institute recently selected UCI Health ophthalmologist Dr. Lilangi Ediriwickrema for its prestigious Council of Vision Editors Fellowship program.

Ediriwickrema, who specializes in oculoplastic and reconstructive ocular surgery, neuro-ophthalmology and orbital disease at the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute, joins the two-year fellowship created by the National Eye Institute to give early-career vision scientists an opportunity to learn about academic peer review, editorial board and publication processes from leading vision journal editors.

Her translational research interests include validating biomarkers of periocular inflammatory and infiltrative disease, and multimodal oculofacial imaging. Her research has appeared in prestigious, peer-reviewed journals. She also has been named a Physician of Excellence by the Orange County Medical Association.

As an associate professor in the UC Irvine School of Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, Ediriwickrema continues to advance research in reconstructive eye surgery, ocular and orbital eye disorders.

UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute

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EVENTS

Spring 2026 Events

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.ophthalmology.uci.edu/events

Dry eyes
June 2, 2026
What is dry eye and how is it treated?
Sanjay Kedhar, MD

Glaucoma
July 14, 2026
Ten commonly asked questions about glaucoma
Ken Lin, MD, PhD

Corneal transplant
Aug. 4, 2026
What is corneal transplantation? Information for patients and donor families
Olivia Lee, MD

Optical shop
Sept. 1, 2026
What you need to know about contact lenses
Joseph Bui, OC

Oculoplastics
Oct. 6, 2026
Sags and bags
Seanna Grob, MD

Low vision
Nov. 10, 2026
Living with vision impairment
Karen Lin, OD
Nilima Tanna OTR

Pediatric ophthalmology
Dec. 1, 2026
What you need to do to take care of your child's vision
Charlotte Gore, MD

LASIK surgery seminars
Oct. 1, 2026
Nov. 5, 2026
Feb. 4, 2027
April 8, 2027
Thursdays, 7–8 p.m.
Zoom

Clinical trials

Participating in clinical trials gives patients access to innovative care, while helping researchers study the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of eye conditions.

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

CLINIC LOCATIONS

UCI Health Gavin Herbert Eye Institute — Brea
380 W. Central Ave., Suite 400
Brea, CA 92821

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

To make an appointment, call 949-824-2020

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