



We Support New Ideas

Glaucoma Research Society of Canada News & Information

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Walk for Research Supporters Raise Over \$65K



(Left photo) Board members Jim Parks, Alf Kwinter, Dr. Catherine Birt and Tom Gottlieb took part in the Society's 2024 Walk for Research. (Right photo) As did Society administrator, Norlan Roberts.



A Free Webinar for Newly Diagnosed Glaucoma Patients

My Glaucoma Journey

A free webinar presentation on the basics of glaucoma for newly diagnosed glaucoma patients

June 18th, 2025 @ 7:00pmEST

Presented by:



Glaucoma Research Society of Canada

Includes a question and answer period with an expert panel of **CANADIAN GLAUCOMA SPECIALISTS**

Presented by:



Dr. Michael Balas
MD

Q&A Panel:



Dr. Rajiv Bindlish
MD, FRCSC, DABO



Dr. Catherine Birt
MA, MD, FRCSC



Dr. Cindy Hutnik
BSc, MD, PhD, FRCSC(C)

TOPICS INCLUDE:

What is Glaucoma | What to Expect | Risk Factors | Family Connections | Testing Basics | Treatment Options
How to take glaucoma medication & why it matters | How to make the most of your eye health appointments



Scan the QR code or visit: <https://www.glaucomaresearch.ca/mgj-registration> to register for this live webinar

This seminar is supported through an unrestricted educational grant from Théa Pharma Canada Inc.



President's Message



Last year's Annual Supporters' Meeting, held virtually on October 17, was a great success! One of the highlights was the 14th Annual Albert Waxer Lecture about the side-effects of glaucoma

medications, presented by Dr. Michael Balas. If you missed it, you can watch the lecture and the Q&A session on our website.

The Board of Directors continues to meet regularly online to focus on the Society's mission: raising funds for glaucoma research grants. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, these grants are made possible. In this newsletter, you'll find details on how you can support the Society in a tax-efficient way.

Last year, instead of joining the Toronto Waterfront Marathon, we launched our very own *Walk for Research*. This new event allowed us to save on service charges and raise over \$65,000 – a huge achievement!

Mark your calendars for this year's *Walk for Research* on Sunday, October 26, and our *2025 Annual Supporters' Meeting* on Wednesday, October 22. Stay tuned to our website for updates on these events.

Additionally, once the audited financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2024, are ready, they'll be available on our website.

We're also excited to offer engaging webinars. Our Q&A webinar with three renowned glaucoma specialists—Drs. Cindy Hutnick, Catherine Birt and Delan Jinapriya—on March 12, during *World Glaucoma Week*, was a big hit!

If you missed it, you can watch it on our website. The next free webinar, designed for those newly diagnosed

with glaucoma, will take place on June 18. More details are available elsewhere in this newsletter.

Finally, we've upgraded our website to make it easier for you to find and access information. Check it out!

James M. Parks, President

Walking More Than 10,000 Steps Daily May Enhance Ocular Blood Flow

A recent study found that patients with primary open-angle glaucoma (POAG) who walked more than 10,000 steps daily had higher optic disc vessel density compared to those who walked less. The findings suggest that increasing daily steps may potentially improve ocular blood flow in POAG patients.

Journal of Glaucoma, Feb 4, 2025

Link Between Alcohol Use and Glaucoma Risk

A recent study reported a link between alcohol consumption and the risk of POAG. Drinking four or more drinks per week significantly increased the likelihood of developing glaucoma. This risk was particularly higher among female participants.

Journal of Glaucoma, Feb 2025

Stress Increases IOP Among University Students

Academic pressure significantly increases intraocular pressure (IOP), especially in juvenile-onset open-angle glaucoma (JOAG) patients aged 18–27 years. Stress-induced IOP elevation showed less fluctuation over time. Further studies are needed to fully understand the impact of stress on IOP and glaucoma progression.

Personalized stress assessment and relief strategies may serve as adjunct therapy in glaucoma management.

Journal of Glaucoma, Nov 2024

Patient committed to 'finding a solution' for glaucoma



*Stuart Murray was diagnosed with juvenile open-angle glaucoma, a rare subset of glaucoma, in his late 30s. He has been a patient at UHN's Donald K. Johnson Eye Institute for the past 35 years.
(Photo: Courtesy Stuart Murray)*

By Sara Yuan

Diagnosed with glaucoma in his late 30s, Stuart Murray has spent the past three decades turning his experience into advocacy, helping others to navigate the same journey.

Glaucoma is a progressive eye disease that damages the optic nerve and may lead to vision loss and blindness for some individuals. In 1987, during a family vacation in Atlantic Canada, Stuart was swimming on a sandbar when sand got into his eye, causing a scratch. What seemed like a minor irritation led Stuart to a local physician, who examined his eye and unexpectedly told him that he might have glaucoma.

Upon returning to Ontario, Stuart visited his family doctor, but was unable to get a referral to see an ophthalmologist because he was "far too young to have glaucoma." Glaucoma is an eye condition that is more common in older adults. In fact, it is the leading cause of irreversible blindness for people over the age of 60. It wasn't until three years later that Stuart was finally referred to Dr. Graham Trope, a former glaucoma specialist at University Health Network's (UHN) Donald K. Johnson Eye Institute (DKJEI). Stuart was diagnosed with juvenile open-angle glaucoma, a rare subset of glaucoma diagnosed in individuals under 40.

"It's devastating hearing the news, especially when I was told that the damage was rather severe, and if I didn't come in, I would be blind in six months," says Stuart. "All I could think of at the time was about going blind and all the things I wouldn't be able to do."

March 9 to 15 is World Glaucoma Week. "See the future clearly," is the theme for 2025, which emphasizes the importance of early detection, regular eye care and community education to prevent vision loss.



*Dr. Irfan Kherani is a glaucoma and cataract specialist at UHN's Donald K. Johnson Eye Institute.
(Photo: UHN)*

For the past 35 years, Stuart has been under the care of DKJEI, where he received a few laser treatments and trabeculectomy surgeries, a standard glaucoma

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procedure in which a hole in the eye is created to allow drainage of fluid out of the eye, in order to reduce eye pressures.

When Dr. Trope retired in 2022, Dr. Irfan Kherani, a glaucoma and cataract specialist, took over his practice and started seeing Stuart. Because of this condition, Stuart lost his driver's license and can no longer enjoy his favourite activity — scuba diving — as the pressure changes experienced underwater may increase the intraocular pressure (IOP), risking further damage to the optic nerve and worsening eyesight.

Vision diseases such as glaucoma can cause irreversible damage to the eyes and there is currently no cure. However, early prevention and diagnosis can help slow down or prevent vision loss. "Glaucoma is a silent disease as it often has no symptoms in its early stages," says Dr. Kherani. "Screening for the development of glaucoma is of paramount importance because we often don't know that it's there."

Despite living with glaucoma for over 30 years, Stuart still has parts of his vision remaining — 24 per cent in one eye, eight per cent in the other — and his vision remains relatively stable.



Stuart Murray, (L), with fellow members of the Glaucoma Research Society of Canada. (Photo: Courtesy Stuart Murray)

Having experienced glaucoma firsthand, Stuart transformed his journey into advocacy. Starting as a volunteer delivering brochures to ophthalmologist offices, Stuart is now a member of the Board of Directors for the Glaucoma Research Society of Canada (GRSC), helping to raise awareness on glaucoma, speaking at conferences, connecting with patients who also live with the condition, and supporting fundraising efforts.

"I have two kids, and glaucoma is a genetic disease," says Stuart. "So, if there's some way to contribute to finding a solution, I'd certainly do it."

Founded by Dr. Trope, GRSC is the only Canadian charity solely dedicated to funding glaucoma research. Since 1989, it has raised more than \$6 million in support of 319 research projects. Research plays a critical role in advancing diagnostics and developing novel and more effective treatments for glaucoma.

"It's an exciting time for glaucoma research," says Dr. Kherani. "We can now intervene in glaucoma earlier and safer. Now, we have more options that we can consider, so the opportunity to treat the disease in its earlier form is a bit more prominent now."

This article was published March 12, 2025 by University Health Network (UHN) Donald K. Johnson Eye Institute.



**Dr. Rajiv Bindlish
Answers
Your Questions
about Glaucoma**

Does exercise make a difference for glaucoma patients?

Living a healthy lifestyle benefits your eyes as well as your whole body. Aerobic exercise can slightly lower eye pressure, but more importantly, it may improve blood flow to the eyes, helping them resist damage from glaucoma.

Can I practise yoga if I have glaucoma?

Certain yoga poses, especially those where your head is lower than your heart—like downward dog, spinal inversions, or headstands—can increase eye pressure. If you have progressive or advanced glaucoma, avoid these poses.

Should you sleep on your back if you have glaucoma?

Lying flat can raise eye pressure slightly. Research suggests sleeping with your head and shoulders elevated at an angle. If your glaucoma is severe and worsening even at low pressures, consider adjusting your bed so your head is raised by 20 to 30 degrees.

Can You Help?

The Glaucoma Research Society of Canada is looking for a volunteer with fundraising experience in the charitable sector to join its Board as a non-paid Board member. For details, call the Society at **416-483-0200; 1-877-483-0204 (toll-free).**

How could AI help with detecting and treating glaucoma?

In the future, optical coherence tomography (OCT) and visual field machines might be available outside clinics—like in pharmacies—for people to take measurements themselves. AI systems could then analyze the data, prioritize patients based on urgency, and recommend follow-up care with an ophthalmologist. This could be particularly helpful in rural or low-resource areas.

What is the success rate for glaucoma surgery?

Perfect success—where eye pressure is completely controlled, and no drops are needed after surgery—does not always occur. However, around 80% of surgeries are considered successful, even if they require continuing with eye drops. The important thing is getting the pressure down, whether with drops, surgery, or a combination of both.

Email Your Questions about Glaucoma to:

info@glaucomaresearch.ca

Get Active for the Cure in 2025!

Join other Supporters in our 2025 Walk for Research Sunday October 26

For details check our website www.glaucomaresearch.ca or contact us at info@glaucomaresearch.ca

Highlights from the 2024 Annual Supporters' Meeting

The Glaucoma Research Society of Canada held its Annual Supporters' Meeting as a live webinar on Thursday, October 17, 2024. Treasurer Tom Gottlieb started the event by thanking supporters for helping make another successful year possible.

President James Parks introduced the Board of Directors with a slideshow that showcased their professional backgrounds. He emphasized that their volunteer contributions help the Society keep administrative costs low.

Mr. Parks presented the 2024 Recognition Awards to:

- **Geek Power Inc.** for their exceptional work on the Society's website and research portal, along with their many years of IT support;
- Susan McNeil, Gayle Willson, Alexandra Mendes, and Cameron Beaton of **Cambridge Toyota** for their generous donations and ongoing dedication;
- Society **Treasurer Tom Gottlieb** for his outstanding service and commitment during his seven years on the Board.

On behalf of the Board, Mr. Gottlieb also congratulated Ms. Norlan Roberts on her one-year anniversary as the Society's Office Administrator.

Before presenting the Treasurer's Report, Mr. Gottlieb shared insights into the Society's month-to-month operations. He reminded attendees about the upcoming fundraising 5K **Walk for Research** and encouraged them to participate.

In his report, Mr. Gottlieb announced that the Society had awarded \$359,393 in grants to fund 15 glaucoma research projects across Canada in 2024. This amount was slightly lower than the \$374,874 distributed in 2023, but he thanked donors for making these grants possible.

Dr. Trope then introduced Dr. Michael Balas, the keynote speaker of the **14th Annual Albert Waxer Lecture**. Dr. Balas delivered an engaging presentation on *Understanding the Side-Effects of Glaucoma Medications: A Focus on Prostaglandins*.

After the lecture, Board Director Dr. Rajiv Bindlish moderated a lively Q&A session with Dr. Balas and glaucoma specialist Dr. Catherine Birt. To close the meeting, Mr. Parks presented Dr. Balas with a certificate of appreciation and thanked everyone for attending.

For those who missed the event, a recording of the 2024 Annual Supporters' Meeting is available at www.glaucomaresearch.ca or by emailing info@glaucomaresearch.ca.

In this article Professor Emeritus Dr. Paul Palmberg, who spent 48 years as a glaucoma specialist and has now been a glaucoma patient for two years, shares his experience with at-home visual field testing

My Experience with At-Home Visual Field Testing

Since I have normal tension glaucoma, I decided to test myself at home using the Virtual Vision VR (virtual reality) headset and program. I found it easy to use, and the results displayed on my laptop were comparable to the in-office Humphrey Visual Field tests. The headset is comfortable to wear and allows me to conveniently establish a baseline set of fields.

To determine whether the visual fields are stable or progressing, it's essential to get several baseline fields within the first year or two. It has been reassuring to see stability in reproducible fields. I believe this is the way forward for those who can afford to buy (or rent) the machines for home use.

I also got a virtual reality vision field (VR VF) headset and an iCare Tonometer for a family member with uveitis to monitor intraocular pressure (IOP) changes at home. This monitoring enables an early return to a glaucoma specialist if necessary.

Many competing VR VF models are emerging, with numerous validation studies in progress. I don't have information on comparative features, programs, performance, or price.

– Paul Palmberg, MD, PhD Professor Emeritus-Active

SAVE THE DATE!

**The Glaucoma Research Society
of Canada's**

**2025 Annual Supporters'
Meeting & 15th Annual
Albert Waxer Lecture**

**will be held online on
Wednesday October 22**

Please check our website
www.glaucomaresearch.ca
closer to the date for more details.

Or, if you're on our email list, sit
back, relax, and await your emailed
invitation!

To join our email list, please contact
us at **info@glaucomaresearch.ca**

Comparing Diabetes Treatments and Glaucoma Risk

A study examined medical records
from 2006-2024 across 120 health
care organizations in 17 countries.

It compared glucagon-like peptide 1
(GLP-1) receptor agonists and
metformin on glaucoma risk in type 2
diabetes patients.

GLP-1 receptor agonists were linked
to a lower incidence of primary open-
angle glaucoma, ocular hypertension,
and the need for glaucoma treatments
than metformin.

A prospective study is needed to
determine whether GLP-1 drugs lower
the risk of glaucoma in non-diabetics.

***Journal of Ophthalmology,
March 2025; epub Aug 23, 2024***

Powerful Ways for You to Help Fund Research

You can support the Society financially, not only with cash donations, but with donations of publicly listed securities (to avoid recognition of capital gains), transfers or designations of insurance policies or registered plans such as RRSPs, RRIFs or TFSAs, bequests under wills and through other methods of giving.

You can give an existing life insurance policy or purchase a new one naming the Glaucoma Research Society of Canada as owner/beneficiary. Gifts of an existing policy entitle the donor to a fair market value tax receipt, which may be greater than the cash surrender value. They may also require the donor to report income for tax purposes.

You can also designate the Society as the beneficiary under a life insurance policy, a registered retirement savings plan, a registered retirement income fund or a tax-free savings account. In that way, the funds will be paid directly to the Society without passing under a will or through an estate.

Giving marketable securities eliminates tax on a capital gain and entitles the donor to a fair market value receipt. This is more tax efficient than giving cash after selling the securities. Donors should seek tax advice in connection with gifts of insurance policies or securities or by making designations.

Corporations can also make donations to charities. A donation of securities by a private company could save tax and provide tax benefits to the company which could be worth as much as 90% of the value of the donation. A donor who owns securities personally can transfer them to a private company (at no tax cost by taking appropriate steps to avoid recognition of any accrued gains) and the company can then donate them to the charity.

Please ask our office for details or consult with your tax advisor.

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