

# Optimum VA



The Official Newsletter of the  
National Association of Veterans Affairs Optometrists

Summer 2015

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Optimum VA Newsletter is a quarterly publication distributed in December, March, June and September.

Deadline for submissions are 11/30, 2/28, 5/31, and 8/31 respectively.

Please e-mail any submissions to our newsletter editor, Michelle Lynch at [michelle.lynch@va.gov](mailto:michelle.lynch@va.gov)

## President's Column

*Nancy Wong, O.D., Ph.D.*



## From the Editor

*Michelle Chen, O.D.*



Welcome to the summer edition of the NAVAQ newsletter! The next Academy meeting in New Orleans is just around the corner and I'm looking forward to seeing many familiar faces again in New Orleans.

We are continuing our Founding Member Spotlight and this issue features Dr. Charles Mullen, Dr. Clifford Scott, and Dr. Ken Myers. Although none of them are with the VA presently, they have all made meaningful contributions towards the growth and expansion of VA Optometry.

Dr. Stacia Yaniglos from the Cleveland VA is also featured in this newsletter. After more than three decades of devoted VA service, she has now retired, but the Newsletter Committee was fortunate enough to be able to interview her before her departure to share some of her thoughts reflecting back on her clinic and service.

This time of year is a busy time for residency programs with new residents undergoing training and orientation. Residency programs are a crucial backbone in VA Optometry education and recruitment. The Newsletter Committee interviewed 3 VA optometrists who currently serve as Residency Coordinators at their facilities. They are Dr. Scott Slagle, Dr. Jeffrey Joy and Dr. Deana Lum. Read more about what they had to say regarding their experiences as a VA resident and eventually transitioning to Residency Coordinator.

Please feel free to email me at [Michelle.Chen1@va.gov](mailto:Michelle.Chen1@va.gov) with any comments, suggestions or ideas for the NAVAQ newsletter.

## Updates from the NAVAO Board

*Janel L. Chou, O.D.*

### SECRETARY



I hope everyone is staying cool this summer! While, hopefully, thinking about taking some much needed downtime, please take an opportunity to review the NAVAO website (NAVAO.org) for interesting updates in the world of VA Optometry. The minutes to the monthly service conference calls are always available and archived for your convenience. They include updates in important VHA Handbooks and Directives that directly affect your clinics. There are new updates in productivity and tracking workload as well as advances in rehabilitation services and improving access to care. Don't forget to continue to look at the One Source Document site to keep abreast of the manufacturers' guidelines for reprocessing reusable equipment as well. The website has a lot of links and resources that may be helpful for you, including forms, guidelines and templates you can use. Please keep in mind that this organization is also here to answer any questions or concerns that you have within VA Optometry. Many of your fellow NAVAO members are wonderful resources and would love to hear from you if you have a question or are looking for a best practice to help your clinic run smoother. Please use the member directory and the website to your advantage as a great benefit to your membership. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me at [janel.chou@va.gov](mailto:janel.chou@va.gov). Have a great summer!

*Katherine L. Wang, O.D.*

### MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR



Dear NAVAO Members,

**Please invite your residents to join NAVAO!**

**Participation at the October 2015 NAVAO meeting will be free for NAVAO Resident members when they register!** Registration will include the NAVAO meeting along with drink and dessert reception. (Meeting registration will be online as details are finalized)

The NAVAO Meeting will be taking place in New Orleans, in conjunction with the American Academy of Optometry.

The NAVAO is also offering eight, \$250 scholarships\* for use at the American Academy of Optometry available by application to current, active resident NAVAO members!

To apply for the scholarship, the 2015-2016 VA resident should submit a statement of intent for use of the scholarship for the American Academy of Optometry in 200 words or less and also a current Curriculum Vitae. **The deadline for the scholarship application is Friday, September 11th** The statement of intent and their CV should be submitted to: [info@navao.org](mailto:info@navao.org). Recipients of the scholarship will be announced by September 25th.

\*Scholarship funding is provided by IET (International Engineering Technology) Foundation and NAVAO.

*Jennifer Gustafson, O.D.*

**MEMBER-AT-LARGE (Director of Events)**



Please join us for the National Association of VA Optometrists annual meeting which is scheduled for the evening of Thursday October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015 in conjunction with the American Academy of Optometry Meeting. This year's NVAO meeting will be at the Hilton Riverside in New Orleans. The Business Meeting (members only) will be held from 7:15-8:00 pm and will be immediately followed by the Reception and Program at 8:00 pm.

Please take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to socialize/network with your fellow VA optometrists! The reception will include drinks, appetizers, and desserts.

We look forward to seeing you in New Orleans!

*Kevin Mercado, O.D.*

**DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY**



I hope everyone is enjoying their summers. Please continue to contact me if you have any problems with the website. Remember that our many website pages are updated regularly, including open VA job positions, news sections and workgroup/conference call minutes!

*Kelly Thomann, O.D.    Maksha Sink, O.D.    Brian Kawasaki, O.D., M.B.A.*

**VICE-PRESIDENT**

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## Founding Member Spotlight: Dr. Clifford Scott



**CLIFFORD SCOTT** was named the New England College of Optometry's 12th president in December of 2009. Prior to his appointment as president, Dr. Scott was the dean of academic affairs and also held the position of chair of the Department of Community Health at the College for eight years. He has been a faculty member at the College since 1970 and has been a professor of optometry since 1990.

Dr. Scott has extensive experience in teaching contact lenses as well as 38 years of clinical experience in hospital-based optometry. As the chief optometrist at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in West Roxbury, his responsibilities included both the supervision of all residents and students in the optometry section of the hospital as well as the provision of direct eye care to patients. He has lectured nationally and internationally on topics related to eye disease and is an experienced clinical researcher.

Dr. Scott earned a Doctor of Optometry degree from the Massachusetts College of Optometry, now the New England College of Optometry, in 1968. He earned a master of public health degree in health care policy and management from Harvard University in 1984. He was the 2001 recipient of the Dupuis-Pellerin Award for Faculty Excellence and was named a Diplomate in the Cornea and Contact Lens Section of the American Academy of Optometry in 1993. Dr. Scott maintains a professional affiliation with the American Optometric Association. He is a member of the board of directors of the Boston Foundation for Sight, the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry, the Massachusetts Society of Optometrists, and OneSight. Dr. Scott is also on the board of advisers for the Asian American Civic Association.

### **How did you first become actively involved with VA Optometry?**

When the VA created the Optometry Service in 1976, Kenneth Myers, PhD, OD, was appointed as the founding director. There were approximately 35 initial staff optometry positions authorized. Ken, who had become a friend while he was a student at the New England College of Optometry, encouraged me to apply to the West Roxbury VAMC, which already had a contract-service optometrist two days a week. I became the chief of the section and within a few years, had developed a student and resident program affiliated with NECO. At that time, the Brockton and the West Roxbury VAMCs - both of which are Harvard affiliates - merged. Barry Fisch, OD, the chief of the Brockton clinic, and I became co-chiefs of the melded section and continued to add students and residents.

### **What contributions to VA Optometry have you participated in that you feel most proud of?**

We put much effort into developing broad clinical privileges through credentialing and training. We had both went to Oklahoma and took the laser certification course then sat for the Oklahoma board and became licensed. Over time, the Medical Center's professional standard board authorized us to manage a wide array of conditions. We co-taught the ocular disease course at NECO and supervised students and residents in their contact lens clinic. In addition, we wrote articles on clinical techniques and taught continuing education workshops on optometry's "new" procedures: gonioscopy, foreign body removal, scleral indentation, and the like. It's been very gratifying to see the impact that these techniques have made on the level of practice in U.S. optometry. We were in the right place at the right time. Barry and I have continued the partnership at NECO as President and Academic Dean.

## What advice would you give to new ODs entering the optometry profession?

The issues that the profession faces today are very different. Team-based care has shifted us from physician-centric health care to a patient-centric system. Optometry will be less defined by an ocular silo and have a more interactive role teamed with other disciplines to manage the spectrum of conditions manifested by each patient. Value-based incentives will encourage greater use of technology, much of which will be delegated to technical staff. We will be doing less data gathering and more analysis and case management. The VA is several steps ahead of the rest of the health care field in practicing integrated care. For decades, VA patients have benefited from a seamless, ubiquitous medical record, accessible from any VA facility in the country.

## What would you like to see happen in the future of VA Optometry?

I feel that my two decades as a VA optometrist provided the most satisfaction as well as the greatest professional growth in my career. As a veteran, I still use the VA for most of my health care because of the quality and accessibility. The optometrists who practice within the system today are fortunate to be at the cutting edge of US health care. And it's their honor to provide services to the nation's veterans.

## Founding Member Spotlight: Dr. Charles Mullen



**CHARLES MULLEN** graduated from the Massachusetts College of Optometry (currently the New England College of Optometry) in 1970 as a Doctor of Optometry. Dr. Mullen then became the special assistant to the President for Clinical Development at the New England College of Optometry. From 1970-1976, Dr. Mullen also served as Director of general clinic, Director of clinics, and Executive Director, of the Division of Clinical Services of the New England College of Optometry.

From the New England College of Optometry Dr. Mullen became the Executive Director of the Eye Institute of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry. During his time at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (1976-1990), Dr. Mullen also served as Director of the Division of Patient Care, and as Consultant to the President.

From the Pennsylvania College of Optometry Dr. Mullen became the Director of Optometry Service to the Veteran Health Administration Department of Veteran Affairs. Dr. Mullen served within the Veterans Affairs health system from 1990-1996. Under Dr. Mullen VA Optometry expanded along with placement for students and resident clinical training. Dr. Mullen also created the operational infrastructure for the National Optometric Service, standardized the educational component system-wide and implemented protocols for optometric clinical credentialing and privileging.

From 1996 through 2002, Dr. Mullen served as the President of the Illinois College of Optometry. Dr. Mullen current serves as the Co-Founder and President of the American Board of Optometry Specialties in Big Rapids, Michigan.

Upon being asked to be featured in this edition of the NVAO Optimum VA Newsletter, Dr. Mullen expressed the following: "Thank you for your kind invitation to share my experiences in VHA and also to offer recommendations for the future of VA Optometry. It is an unexpected privilege to recall my tenure as

Director, VA Optometry Service (1990-96). In reviewing my files in preparation for this interview, I remembered the many outstanding VA optometrists whose dedication and support were essential in developing and implementing the objectives of the Optometry Service Strategic Plan. It was an honor to have such outstanding clinicians and educators as colleagues.”

### **How did you first become actively involved with VA Optometry?**

In the 1970s, while serving as the Director of NECO’s clinical program, Dr. Ken Myers, Founding Director of the VA Optometry Service, called and asked if NECO was interested in sponsoring a VA funded residency program at the Boston VA OPC. After establishing the OPC residency program and agreeing to further development of residency programs at other Boston VA facilities, I then served on Dr. Myers’ Advisory Group for a number of years. Ken and I shared a similar view on the importance of optometrists practicing in collaboration with physicians. I became increasingly interested in the potential that VA Optometry could offer in advancing the Profession of Optometry in patient care, clinical education and research. When Dr. Myers resigned as Director in 1990, I enthusiastically agreed to succeed him.

### **What contributions to VA Optometry have you participated in that you feel proud of?**

After arriving at VACO, I soon learned that Dr. Myers had built a solid foundation for the VA Optometry Service. His meticulous attention to detail in working with the AOA Washington Office positioned VA optometrists in Title 38 along with physicians and dentists. Dr. Myers wrote the Qualification Standards which established very high standards for the appointment and promotion of optometrists. He also developed the first optometry residency program and academic affiliation with a college of optometry, and later established numerous clinical training programs for optometry students and residents. He wrote the Optometry Service’s first Plan and encouraged the development of NAVAQ. Although my contributions pale in comparison to the significant accomplishments of Dr. Myers, I am proud of the following:

- Appointed the first Optometry Field Advisory Group
- In collaboration with NAVAQ, ASCO and the AOA, I updated and enhanced the Optometry Service Strategic Plan. ASCO forwarded the Plan to VACO and the Undersecretary for Health instructed me to implement the key elements of the Plan including the addition of 53 centrally-funded optometry positions, 21 residents and the necessary eye care equipment.
- At the invitation of the Undersecretary for Health, briefed the senior administration of VHA on all aspects of the Optometry Service and gained standing in VACO for the Optometry Service.
- Standardized the optometry clinical education program in cooperation with ASCO.
- Disseminated numerous clinical guidelines including preferred practice patterns, credentialing and privileging, eye care space criteria, staffing models and productivity standards.
- With assistance from several NAVAQ members, conducted a system-wide inventory of all VHA eye care (optometrists and ophthalmologists) manpower, facilities and training programs. The results were presented to SMAG by the Optometry Representative along with recommendations to further increase eye care manpower, facilities and equipment.
- At the request of the VHA senior administration, interviewed and recommended for appointment the first ophthalmological consultant to VHA, and effectively advanced an agenda of cooperation between the two eye care disciplines.
- Appointed by the Undersecretary for Health to a high level Eye Care Advisory Group consisting of nationally recognized optometrists and ophthalmologists. In consultation with the Group, advised the Undersecretary on policy to improve collaboration between the two eye care disciplines in patient care, education and research.
- Stimulated research in low vision rehabilitation with \$6 million in funded research projects.

- Reduced the average waiting time for primary eye care services by 30%.
- Initiated a nation-wide recruitment effort to reach under-represented groups for placement in VA optometry staff and residency positions resulting in a significant increase in female staff and residency appointments.

### **What advice would you give to new ODs entering the profession?**

Complete a Specialty Residency Program and achieve Specialty Board Certification preferably in Medical Optometry. The most challenging and rewarding positions in optometry will be within hospitals and other medical facilities and specialty credentials will be required for appointment.

### **What would you like to see happen in the future of VA Optometry?**

Dr. Townsend has done an outstanding job in increasing the number of VA optometrists, residents and students on clinical rotation. He has instituted innovative programs such as research fellowships while significantly expanding low vision programs. He has developed the VA Optometry Service into one of the most productive in VHA. The Eye Care Handbook he authored has positioned optometry as a major patient care and clinical training component in the VA as an equal partner with ophthalmology. The Handbook is considered the model for all optometry programs located within medical facilities.

Despite the impressive progress, more needs to be done. I would like to see the following completed in the next two years.

- Optometry Qualification Standards updated to include requirements for Specialty Residency Training and Specialty Board Certification in appropriate sections.
- Optometry Service Strategic Plan Updated in collaboration with NAVAQ, ASCO and AOA and submitted to the Undersecretary for Health with specific recommendations.
- Restrictions or caps on optometrists pay removed to encourage retention of the most experienced clinicians.
- Optometry Service Field Advisory Group to brief the new Optometry SMAG Representative on the challenges and opportunities in VA Optometry.
- Encourage more active involvement of academic affiliates with VA facilities including participation on Deans Committees and other advisory groups.
- Appointment of a VA representative to the ACOE.
- Continue VA Optometry's leadership in Specialty Training and Board Certification by ABCMO. Encourage the development of the American Board of Optometry Specialties (ABOS) similar to the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS). This oversight board would establish and ensure high standards for all Specialty Certification Boards.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my VA experiences with NAVAQ.



## Founding Member Spotlight: Dr. Ken Myers



**KEN MYERS** was serving in Headquarters, Washington, DC., from 1974 to 1989 and led the implementation of PL 93-82 and PL 94-581 and deployment of optometrists into the VA's physician-dentist personnel system and their appointments as medical staff members holding medical prescribing privileges.

He developed national VA medical training rotations for optometry students, and originated national optometry residency programs and led their accreditation by ACOE. During his tenure, VA optometrists became leaders in published clinical articles, CE lectures and the training of students and residents.

A founder in 1978, and life member, of the National Association of VA Optometrists, he served as its Executive Director from 2005-2009 before

founding ABCMO in 2009.

Dr. Myers served as dean and professor at the Michigan College of Optometry; chief optometrist at a VA medical clinic; editor of the Journal of the AOA Medical Abstracts Section and is the author of over 50 peer-reviewed papers. A past member of the AOA, Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, and President of the AAO Michigan Chapter, he has served on a number of national advisory panels and was a leading advocate for the creation of the ACMO examination offered by NBEO to those completing accredited medical optometry residencies.

He received the M.Sc. in Physics in 1969 and the Ph.D. in Biological Physics from The Ohio State University in 1972, where he was elected to the Sigma Phi Sigma physics honor society and taught optics at the College of Optometry. He was awarded the O.D. degree from the New England College of Optometry in 1974 while a faculty member and is a visiting lecturer at the University of Akron from which he earned undergraduate degrees in electrical engineering and physics-mathematics in 1963 and 1965.

The New England College of Optometry recently awarded its Presidential Medal to Dr. Myers for furthering the clinical education of optometry students, originating optometry residency programs and developing the specialty of medical optometry.

### **How did you first become actively involved in VA Optometry?**

While serving in Headquarters, Washington D.C. in 1973, I led the implementation of Public Law 93-82 which required the VA to establish an optometry program.

### **What contributions to VA Optometry have you participated in that you feel most proud of?**

The institution of laws early in my career, which helped not only establish VA optometry, but called for its expansion and its teaching affiliation with optometry schools; And later the creation of the American Board of Certification in Medical Optometry (ABCMO).

### **What advice would you give to new ODs entering the optometry profession?**

Young ODs should obtain and carefully read the two Lewin Reports of 2012 which comment on the large surplus of optometrists. It addresses the effects of increased enrollment in optometry schools and the opening of new schools on the younger generation of optometrists.

### What would you like to see happen in the future of VA Optometry?

I would like to see the NAVAIO be more active in promoting VA optometry by its working with and supporting Director Townsend.

## Farewell to Dr. Stacia Yaniglos – 36 Years of Service



**STACIA YANIGLOS** trained at The Ohio State University College of Optometry. She practiced for two years at the Medical Foundation of Bellaire before coming to Cleveland in 1979, where she became Chief of Optometry at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center. She is an Associate Professor of Ophthalmology at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and an Associate Clinical Professor of Optometry at the Ohio State University College of Optometry

At the Cleveland VA she developed the Optometry Student Externship Rotations and designed and developed the Optometry Residency. Besides Optometry Students and Residents, she also teaches physiological optics and clinical refraction to Ophthalmology Residents, and primary eye care to Internal Medicine Residents and Medical Students.

She served as a member of the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education for ten years, and continues to act as a consultant to that group. In the course of her career she has collaborated with several excellent research teams investigating the areas of ARMD, oculomotor dysfunction including nystagmus, and structural and functional optic nerve changes in MS.

Development of interdisciplinary eye clinics providing high quality comprehensive care is a career-long interest of Dr. Yaniglos. She has been instrumental in developing remote optometry clinics (CBOC's), which serve to deliver primary care and provide triage and referral for surgical care to outlying populations.

She is the primary Director of Diabetic Teleretinal Imaging for the VA Health Care System of Ohio. Dr. Yaniglos has served in other leadership roles in VISN 10, including Optometric Consultant to the Network Director, convener of VISN-wide optometry meetings, and a leader for VISN optometry initiatives. She co-chaired the VISN 10 Eye Care Work Group which addresses issues of relevance to optometrist and ophthalmologists engaged in VA eye care. Nationally, she served on work groups and committees concerned with optometric education, optometrist productivity, CBOC design, and served as a VA liaison to the ASCO committee on the optometry residency match.

Stacy and her husband David, also an optometrist, live in Kent, Ohio. They are the parents of sons Dan, deceased, and Tom, a chemical engineer living in Philadelphia and working in the pharmaceuticals industry. She will be retiring this summer. In addition to travel, Stacy is looking forward to continuing and expanding her activities with civic organizations, her church, and Women 4 Women, an organization supporting education of Cambodian women. She plans to adopt a Scottish terrier to share her walking excursions.

**What was your clinic like at the Cleveland VA when you first joined and how has it changed since then?**

When I started in 1979, there were three Case Western Reserve Ophthalmology Residents and two Indiana Optometry Externs. The eye clinic attending staff consisted of two or three UH ophthalmologists who made five or six half day visits per month. The eye clinic comprised about 400 square feet, divided into two small exam rooms, one very small exam room, and one tiny room shared by the Goldman Visual Field instrument and the optometry externs. No one had any idea what to do with an optometrist, and frankly, while I had some multidisciplinary experience in a very early HMO, I did not know what to do with a large hospital either. I graduated from Optometry School before OD's were authorized to use diagnostic or therapeutic drugs, so I had to learn BIO, gonio, and even Goldman tonometry through self-study. The issues were scope of practice, organization and reporting relationships, medical staff membership, etc. Quite a difference from our current situation which includes about 3500 square feet at the medical center and 12 various sized CBOC's staffed by 22 OD's with a five resident program and multiple extern affiliations. In addition to primary care, we offer specialty clinics in medical retina, contact lenses, and extensive low vision care including low vision clinics and through our BRC.

**What are some key factors that have contributed to the growth, success and expansion of your clinics?**

I think lots of patience, perseverance, and willingness on the part of our great staff and residents to go the extra mile. We tried hard to embrace every opportunity to promote the eye and visual needs of our veteran patients and to contribute to the educational mission of the medical center, whether that entailed going to a patient's bedside, mentoring a medical student, consulting for a research team, acting as a resource for M&M conferences, working with employee health on laser surveillance, giving an ophthalmology department grand rounds presentation, or going to a health fair. Thanks to a great attending staff and strong affiliates, as well as our wonderful veterans, we have had great success in growing our teaching programs, which have been a great asset for patient care and attracting and retaining excellent attendings.

**How did you step into your current position and how did you adapt (did you have a mentor, previous experience, etc)?**

I was hired as the first optometrist in Cleveland. The position had been open for many months, and the committee was searching for someone with multidisciplinary experience. I had been in an early HMO for about a year and a half, so I had some exposure to practicing within a medical facility. I graduated just as the first couple of residencies were starting, so unfortunately I did not have the benefit of a VA residency to help me. Several very capable and kind people taught and supported me during my first few years – our ACOS for education, one of the UH vitreo-retinal surgeons, and several nurses and surgeons helped me acclimate to the culture. I also got help from some of the early VA optometrists, national VA optometry leadership, and our affiliates.

**What are some things you would have liked to have seen happen before you retired (in your clinic or VA Optometry in general)?**

Well, I feel incredibly proud and privileged to have been part of the changes which have taken place in our clinic and nationally in VA Optometry. I think our particular clinic is expanding in size to another level which will require increased support specific to optometry. I would also like to see increased cohesiveness among the optometrists working at all of our Cleveland & Northeast Ohio facilities. Nationally, I would like to see residency training become part of the normal career path for optometrists, with the VA as the cornerstone for that training. Around the country, I would like to see every VA facility have optometrists using their unique talents in positions of strong leadership in the eye clinics.

## **What advice would you give to the person stepping into your position?**

Think big, be flexible and collaborate, but also maintain reasonable boundaries for your professional group.

## **If there is anything else you would like to add?**

I feel very privileged to have practiced in the era spanning the past 36 years. We've come a long way; the care we are able to offer our patients is phenomenal in terms of more effective drugs, a much larger body of scientific evidence, fantastic imaging, and other great diagnostic modalities. Likewise the outcomes are amazing – when I started practicing, patients frequently were going blind from diabetes; for the unfortunate individuals who were afflicted with wet ARMD, there was really nothing effective to offer; and glaucoma patients got to take pilocarpine four times a day - it worked, if the diagnosis could be made accurately and early enough to help! Today, the interventions that we undertake with our patients are routinely offering a great prognosis for all of these sight threatening conditions. As VA optometrists, we offer state of the art eye care with skill, integrity, and compassion to the most deserving of patients, our veterans!!

## **VA Residency Coordinators who were VA residents**

The months of June to September are some of the busiest months for Optometry residency programs all across the country. Optometry Residency Coordinators work tirelessly to make sure their current residents have completed their residency requirements while simultaneously preparing for the new residents. Residency programs are more valuable than ever, particularly in the VA where the patient population is complex and involves multi-disciplinary care. VA residency experience can play a crucial role in recruitment of staff at VA facilities, as well as training for optometrists who choose to pursue other paths. Three VA Optometrists from the Education Sub-Committee of the Field Advisory Committee were interviewed: Dr. Scott Slagle, Dr. Jeffrey Joy, and Dr. Deana Lum, who are all currently serving as Residency Coordinators, but have been VA residents in the past.

**Dr. Scott Slagle (SS)** graduated from Southern College of Optometry in 1999 and completed his residency in Primary Eye Care at Memphis VAMC in 2000. He went on to join the staff at the Salem VAMC in Virginia, where he became the Residency Coordinator in 2009. Aside from his residency supervision duties, Dr. Slagle is also the Chair of the Education Field Advisory Committee.

**Dr. Jeffrey Joy (JJ)** graduated from Indiana University School of Optometry in 2001 and completed his residency at the Baltimore VAMC in 2002. He became a staff optometrist at the W.G. "Bill" Hefner VAMC in Salisbury, North Carolina, which is where he also supervises the residency program.

**Dr. Deana Lum (DL)** graduated from the University of California at Berkeley School of Optometry in 2006. She went on to do her residency at Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS) in Tucson and joined the staff at the Fresno VA afterwards. Dr. Lum became the Residency Coordinator in 2009 and is also the Section Chief at her facility.

## **Why did you choose to do a residency at the VA and how did it compare to your expectations?**

**SS:** At Southern College of Optometry, I had the opportunity to work with many talented faculty members, many of whom completed a residency at the VA. I was always impressed by their knowledge, skills, and

enthusiasm for practice. There was no doubt that their residency experiences enabled them to provide advanced care for their patients and I wanted to model that. I wanted to hone skills and to develop expertise and confidence in clinical judgments for primary eye care. I saw the VA as an ideal environment to do so for adult patients. The ability to work on all elements of an eye exam, from history to A&Ps, as well as the opportunity to seamlessly integrate my services with other health care professionals was very attractive to me.

**JJ:** I chose a residency at the VA for the exposure to complex patients. I wanted an environment that would solidify my knowledge in the big three (glaucoma, diabetes, and macular degeneration) as well as start me on a lifelong learning path to understanding the ocular manifestation of other systemic diseases. I also wanted the ability to form my own assessment and plans with oversight to build confidence. It far exceeded my expectations in all aspects.

**DL:** Because of my experience at SFVA as a student – I learned a ton, enjoyed the patient population, and was positively influenced by the residents and staff

**What motivated you to pursue a career at the VA and how did you become the residency coordinator at your facility?**

**SS:** During my residency at VA Memphis, I fully intended to complete the residency and subsequently go into private practice. As my experience grew, I gained such an appreciation for clinical educators. I learned how their sharing of experiences and thought processes, as well as their patience and diligence in working with healthcare trainees, served such a vital role in the health care system. It is through this sharing that their practice exponentially impacted the care given to a multitude of veterans. During residency at the VA, I certainly gained even more respect for our veterans and it is always humbling to serve them. My residency experience kindled a desire to serve veterans, but additionally it was the aspiration to participate in clinical education that I gleaned from my VA Mentors, Dr. Gary Brough (residency) and Dr. Larry Bennett (student externship) which inspired me to work for the VA. I consider the VA to be that perfect blend of academia and clinical practice. It is this blend that fosters intellectual and professional growth, both for the trainees and attendings. I am continually inspired by the talents of so many VA optometrists and ophthalmologists, and am equally inspired by my interactions with students and residents. I think that it was my passion for learning and sharing of experiences that prompted Dr. Eckermann, chief of optometry at Salem VAMC, to ask me to lead the residency program. I remain grateful for the opportunity.

**JJ:** A lot of my colleagues that I looked up to the most were either VA optometrists and/or residency coordinators. I found their knowledge and satisfaction in their job to be extremely high. I became the residency coordinator after being the assistant residency coordinator under Roger Cummings who had numerous years of optometric education experience. I was able to learn a lot from him and the rest of my colleagues before taking over the role.

**DL:** I had a great residency year at the SAVAHCS (Tucson) and wanted to continue to care for the veteran population. I really fell into the role of residency coordinator once the previous residency coordinator relocated.

**How did your own residency experience shape how you supervise your residency program?**

**SS:** Patience and understanding. Those qualities in Dr. Brough challenged me to hone skills and refine clinical acumen. I try my best, in the midst of an often busy clinic, to have that same patience and understanding with resident interactions. Whether that is patiently trying to help them perfect scleral indentation skills on a patient with an obscure retinal tear, or helping them to logically arrive at appropriate diagnostic conclusions using their own thought processes.

**JJ:** I was extremely lucky to have spent six months at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute and then do a year residency at the Baltimore VA. These are two of the premier training programs in the country. These two experiences molded what I thought would be the perfect residency and we have built our program from that vision.

**DL:** I reflect back on my residency year and try to duplicate the positive learning experiences I had with my attending doctors; I try to put myself in their shoes as they progress throughout the year

**What are some unexpected rewards of being a Residency Coordinator?**

**SS:** The obvious is the ultimate friendships that are developed with prior residents from the program. I have had the opportunity to work with some truly amazing and talented residents and I'm very thankful for that opportunity. It is a synergistic experience resulting in professional growth for all of us. I think the unexpected rewards are the relationships formed with other educators. This includes those in medicine and other health care disciplines, in and out of the VA.

**JJ:** The lifelong friendships I have developed with my past residents. It is a pleasure seeing them grow not only professionally, but personally.

**DL:** Seeing your residents succeed after their residency year in the different career paths they take.

**What are the most challenging aspects of being a Residency Coordinator that you didn't anticipate?**

**SS:** Coordination of schedules. Our residents experience rotations in so many different clinics and coordination of clinic schedules is often so convoluted.

**JJ:** While it is anticipated, the first month of every residency year is a challenge. Getting six new residents up to speed on the administrative, clinical, and didactic sides of our program makes for a challenging time of year.

**DL:** The administrative work involved - namely, going through a site visit!

**What kind of advice do you give to your residents who want to work in the VA?**

**SS:** The VA is a rewarding practice of servitude. Despite the challenges that are inherent in all larger organizations, it is an honor to serve the veterans and there are so many professional benefits. I think that many optometrists recognize those substantial merits and thus jobs in the VA can be competitive. Residents

who want to work in the VA should build their experiences in service, scholastic achievement and clinical practice to be attractive to many VA clinics.

**JJ:** Do not limit yourself to one geographic area and be flexible. Also, continue to be a lifelong learner and participate in local, regional and/or national optometric organizations.

**DL:** Network as much as you can! And just apply for the job - you'll never know unless you try

## Upcoming Continuing Education Events 2015

### August 2015

SWFOA Educational Retreat. South Seas Island Resort. Captiva, FL. Jul 31-Aug 2

2015 Colorado Vision Summit. Denver, CO. July 31- Aug. 2

Nova SEE Beach 2015. St. Simons, Island GA. July 31- Aug. 2

AEA Cruises Optometric Seminar. Baltic on the Silver Whisper. Aug. 3-10

SCCO Glaucoma Grand Rounds with Live Patients. SCCO Campus. Aug. 16-17

SCOPA 2015 Annual Meeting. Hilton Head Island, SC. Aug. 20-23

### September 2015

AEA Cruises Optometric Seminar. Europe River Cruise. Sept. 9

Envision Conference. Denver, CO. Sept. 9-12

East Coast Optometric Glaucoma Symposium. Bethesda, MD. Sept. 11-12

SCCO Clinical Pearls you Shouldn't Practice Without. SCCO Campus. Sept. 12th

SCCO Annual Treatment & Mgmt. of Ocular Disease. SCCO Campus. Sept. 13th

NSUOCO Fall Primary Eye Care Update. Tahlequah, OK. Sept. 12-13

International Vision Expo 2015. Las Vegas, NV. Sept. 16-19

Pacific University College of Optometry Tulalip CE. Tulalip, WA. Sept. 20

South Dakota Optometric Society Fall Conference. Rapid City, SD. Sept. 24-25

OAOP Fall Conference (formerly Pioneers in Optometry). Tulsa, OK. Sept. 24-26

NSU 2015 Annual Fall Conference. Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Sept. 26-27

Kentucky Optometric Association Fall Conference. Lexington, KY. Sept. 25-27

Wisconsin Optometric Association Annual Convention. Wisconsin Dells, WI. Sept. 24-27

## October 2015

EastWest Eye Conference. Cleveland, OH. Oct. 1-4.

AAO 2015 New Orleans. New Orleans, LA. Oct. 7-10

Indiana Optometric Association Fall Seminar. Bloomington, IN. Oct. 7-8

NDOA's Annual Congress. Fargo, ND. Oct. 15-17

Iowa Optometric Association Hawkeye Institute. Coralville, IA. Oct. 15-16

North/West Coast Optometric Glaucoma Symposium. San Francisco, CA. Oct. 17

National Glaucoma Society. Malvern, PA. Oct 18

Connecticut Association Annual Educational Conference. Groton, CT. Oct. 24-26

Fellowship Of Christian Optometrists Annual Educational Conference. Nashville, IN. Oct. 30 - Nov. 1

## NAVAO Committees

The **Executive Committee** is responsible for the management of the business of the NAVAO and advises the President on all policy matters of the Association. The Executive Committee consists of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Immediate Past President.

### Executive Committee Members:

- Nancy N. Wong, O.D., Ph.D. (President and Chair)
- Kelly Thomann, O.D. (Vice-President)
- Janel L. Chou, O.D. (Secretary)
- Makesha Sink, O.D. (Treasurer)
- Brian S. Kawasaki, O.D., M.B.A. (Immediate Past President)

The **Finance Committee** monitors funds and assists the Treasurer in the collection and disbursements of funds. The committee also projects future financial demands and sources for the Association.

### Finance Committee Members:

- Makesha Sink, O.D. (Treasurer and Chair)



- Michael McGovern, O.D.
- Weon Jun, O.D.
- Glenn Saxon, O.D.

The **Membership Committee** recommends means for membership retention and growth and monitors pertinent data about the membership.

**Membership Committee Members:**

- Katherine L. Wang, O.D. (Membership Director and Chair)
- Amber Louprasong, O.D. (Vice-Chair)
- Janel L. Chou, O.D. (Executive Committee Liaison)
- Theresa Chong, O.D.
- Rachel Caywood, O.D.
- Meghan Elkins, O.D.
- Joy A Kerns, O.D.
- Rebecca Kline, O.D.
- Susie L. Lim, O.D.
- David N. Lynne, O.D.

The **Events Committee** is responsible for planning and overseeing all NAVAO functions, including the annual NAVAO Business Meeting, Reception, and Dinner.

**Events Committee Members:**

- Jennifer Gustafson, O.D. (Director of Events and Chair)
- Kelly Thomann, O.D. (Executive Committee Liaison)
- Minna Huang, O.D.
- Katherine L. Wang, O.D.
- Molly B. McGinty-Tauren, O.D.

The **Newsletter Committee** is responsible for maintaining a formal communications link with the membership and assists the Newsletter Editor with publishing the quarterly NAVAO Newsletter.

**Newsletter Committee:**

- Michelle Chen, O.D. (Newsletter Editor and Chair)
- Nancy N. Wong, O.D., Ph.D. (Executive Committee Liaison)
- Dawn N. Tomasini, O.D.
- Philip K. Haiman, O.D.
- Robert Wang, O.D.
- Michelle Matson, O.D.
- Paul A. Vejabul, O.D.

The **Technology Committee** is responsible for communicating with the membership via online technology. The Committee will maintain the NAVAO website, make suggestions for its improvement or enhancement, and conduct events requiring technological support as directed by the Executive Committee.

- Kevin Mercado, O.D. (Director of Technology and Chair)
- Brian S. Kawasaki , O.D., M.B.A. (Executive Committee Liaison)
- Jason Powell, O.D.
- Justin Cole, O.D.
- Brett Zwolensky, O.D.