ONE STEP AHEAD
At the core of our educational program is a drive to innovate. We do things a bit differently at Moran, and you can see it in our selective acceptance process, in the unparalleled skill of our graduates, and in the way our faculty members support both professional and personal growth.

At the helm, always pushing us to be one step ahead, is Jeff Pettey, MD. I recently named Dr. Pettey the department’s first vice chair of education—a newly created position that emphasizes our commitment to excellence in teaching and training.

I’m pleased to say our efforts haven’t gone without notice. Ophthalmology Times recently ranked Moran’s residency program No. 6 in the nation, while Doximity ranked Moran at No. 11.

It is a privilege to work alongside Dr. Pettey and so many other exceptional physicians poised to lead our field forward in ways we have yet to imagine.

Sincerely,

Randall J Olson, MD
Professor and Chair, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences
CEO, John A. Moran Eye Center, University of Utah

Being an ophthalmologist is so much more than a job. We must not only provide excellent care to our current patients, but also make system improvements that will allow us to meet the vision needs of the underserved in our own backyard and around the world. The Moran Eye Center’s educational program—one of the most unique in the country—strives to prepare new ophthalmologists for both.

Our recent program rankings are a tremendous honor, but our real validation lives in the physicians we send out into the world. They are accomplishing great things, and I never tire of hearing that they are not only highly skilled but also fully rounded, compassionate physicians.

A recent compliment from a colleague, John Berdahl, MD, might explain it best: “Moran is a powerhouse program that consistently turns out top residents year after year. I know this firsthand, as former Moran resident, Russell Swan, MD, walked into our fellowship on day one as an incredibly skilled surgeon—but more importantly, as a humble and caring person. It was evident that his residency at Moran fostered his growth as both a human and physician.”

I couldn’t agree more.

Jeff Pettey, MD
Professor and Vice Chair of Education, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, John A. Moran Eye Center, University of Utah
High Surgical Volume
In three years, one Moran resident performs over 600 surgeries. Over 250 are cataract—86 is the national requirement—140, the average.

Dedicated Research Time
Moran provides residents with protected research time one-half day each week; one new resident is awarded $15,000, which Moran matches each successive year.

Resident Continuity Clinic
From day one, interns manage a patient’s eye care under the supervision of a board-certified ophthalmologist.

Online Publishing—CORE

Integrated Intern Year
A required intern year at Moran in ophthalmology and internal medicine means residents understand our system from the start and graduate exceptionally prepared.

Quality Improvement
Residents design quality improvement projects as part of value training to provide the best patient outcomes at the lowest possible cost.

Elective Time
Third-year residents can tailor three months of elective time to their interests and participate in international outreach work with Moran’s Global Outreach Division.

Dedicated Research Time
Moran provides residents with protected research time one-half day each week; one new resident is awarded $15,000, which Moran matches each successive year.

“Traditionally, residency training schedules don’t allow a lot of time for residents to develop their own unique talents and interests. This is a profoundly missed opportunity. Our educational philosophy is to provide time and resources for residents to pursue their individual professional development. Because we listen and provide support, residents accomplish truly amazing things.”

—Jeff Pettey, MD

The Moran Difference
At the John A. Moran Eye Center, unique educational approaches help our graduates stay one step ahead.
Could Residency Matching Use Some Quality Improvement?

Like most ophthalmology residents, Sravanthi Vegunta, MD, remembers her application process as a whirlwind of logistics and financial maneuvering. “After applying to numerous programs, juggling schedules, traveling all over the country, interviewing, and spending a lot of money to do so, I have real questions about how the system affects both applicants and institutions and if there’s a better way,” said Vegunta, now a first-year resident at Moran. “For instance, ophthalmology candidates have to go through two match systems, but I’m not really clear about why that is necessary. At the other end, the process also costs academic institutions significant time and money.”

She’s not the only one thinking about the current match system, a hot topic of discussion for ophthalmology educators at the 2017 Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology (AUPO) meeting. Supported by faculty, Vegunta decided to make the match system process the subject of her required resident quality improvement (QI) project.

Vegunta will gather data from Moran’s academic team, residents, and medical students on rotation.

“We’re hoping to look at all costs and ways to decrease them, and we think there are some unique ideas that could revolutionize the system,” she said.

At next year’s AUPO meeting, Jeff Pettey, MD, vice chair of education, will participate in shaping the conversation—and results of Vegunta’s QI project stand to be a part of the ongoing debate.

“Residency is an ideal time for MDs to learn QI skills and apply them to situations they’re experiencing,” said Moran Resident Research Director, Barbara Wirostko, MD. “It helps to establish the learning processes that they will continue to apply over the course of their careers.”

University of Utah Health has led the way as health care systems nationwide pursue process and policy improvements. At Moran, residents are trained to conduct QI projects and must complete one of their own.
Unlike most resident education programs, Moran’s research support doesn’t stop with its faculty. Moran allows residents one-half day each week to devote to their own research throughout their residency and offers funding opportunities through the Achievement Rewards for College Scientists (ARCS) Foundation.

Each year, ARCS awards one new resident $15,000. For the next two years, Moran matches those funds, providing a total of $45,000 for a young researcher who shows exceptional promise.

Here’s What Our ARCS Scholars are Researching

Brad Jacobsen, MD, 2018 ARCS Scholar, is conducting vital research on the burden of retinal disease in Mwanza, Tanzania. With Moran retinal specialist Akbar Shakoor, MD, the team will collect extensive demographic data, test hemoglobin A1c, and take fundus photographs of up to 1,000 rural and urban patients screened for age-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and other retinal diseases. It is the first research project of its kind and will provide data that can be used to improve eye care in Tanzania and Moran’s outreach work in the country.

Bekah Gensure, MD, PhD, 2017 ARCS Scholar, is using a new imaging tool—the fluorescence lifetime imaging ophthalmoscopy (FLIO) camera—with retinal specialist Paul S. Bernstein, MD, PhD, to help identify macular telangiectasia type 2 (MacTel), a notoriously difficult-to-diagnose hereditary disease that causes central vision loss. Gensure is also conducting control studies to characterize fluorescence decay properties of macular carotenoids and will investigate the effects of the natural lens vs. intraocular implants on FLIO measurements. She presented her findings at the ARVO 2018 conference in Hawaii.

Nikko Ronquillo, MD, PhD, ARCS 2016 Scholar, is working on the genetics of MacTel in the Bernstein Lab, studying some of the largest families with MacTel in the world. He is also studying a rare disease called aceruloplasminemia and its association with age-related macular degeneration. As an MD/PhD student in the Wolfgang B. Baehr Lab, Ronquillo became an expert on Senior-Loken syndrome, a rare inherited disease. He has published multiple papers on the subject and presented his research at ASRS 2016, San Francisco; ARVO 2017, Baltimore; Macula Society 2017, Singapore; and will present at ASRS 2018, Vancouver.
Changing Lives, Locally and Globally

At Moran, resident training goes hand in hand with transforming underserved communities. Third-year residents can choose to take part in a three- to four-week international humanitarian rotation with Moran’s Global Outreach Division, which travels to over 20 countries. All residents can provide services for some of Utah’s most underserved populations at four local clinics, on the Navajo Nation, and during Moran’s twice-annual Operation Sight Days. Initiated in 2012 by Moran residents and University of Utah medical students, Operation Sight Day is an outgrowth of the volunteer eye care residents provide at Salt Lake City’s Fourth Street Clinic. Residents realized there was a need to follow up with low-income or uninsured patients who needed surgery to get back to work and live more independent lives.

Today, the event is still organized by Moran residents through the Resident Continuity Clinic, where they care for patients under the supervision of a board-certified ophthalmologist. The American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery adopted Moran’s model in 2014, and to date Moran has assisted more than 170 Utahns with free surgeries.

Outstanding Outreach

Moran international fellows work both locally and globally. Ophthalmic medical device company New World Medical, Inc., recently selected incoming fellow Avni Shah, MD, to receive its $10,000 Fellowship Award. The honor recognizes Shah’s commitment to outreach work to alleviate blindness for underserved populations and will support her travel in upcoming medical missions with Moran to Tanzania, Ghana, Micronesia, India, and Haiti. In Tanzania, Shah will provide glaucoma-specific training; in India, she will learn small-incision cataract surgery and study models for delivering sustainable eye care.

Moran incoming international fellow, Avni Shah, MD.
At the time, it was more of a pipe dream than anything,” he recalled. “International fellowships are highly competitive, and most positions go to doctors outside the US.”

Now, he credits Moran’s integrated internship—a program requirement—with placing him one step ahead in ultimately achieving his goal.

The American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) requires doctors to complete an internship in any field. Moran’s unique program—tailored to ophthalmology—is one of a handful of its kind in the US and is being replicated at programs throughout the country.

“At Moran, our interns start doing ophthalmology immediately through our resident continuity clinic,” said Jeff Pettey, MD, vice chair of education. “They get to know our whole hospital system—clinical care, electronic medical records, VA, children’s hospital, and residents from all specialties. We guide them to certain specialties crucial to ophthalmology—neurology, emergency, and internal medicine. Residents integrate into Moran an entire year earlier with a head start on research and other academic work. In the traditional model, you work for a year, move on, and start from scratch in your program.”

All of this gives Moran third-year residents three months to tailor-make elective opportunities to develop an expertise or a passion. They may also apply to stay on an extra year to develop an interest in research, international ophthalmology, or academic teaching and training—which is exactly what Joos did.

An academic fellowship allowed him to hone his surgical skills and minor plastics procedures with residents in clinic and while teaching surgery at the VA Salt Lake City Medical Center. Because Moran is part of a major trauma center, Joos treated patients with serious injuries—firework blasts to the eyes and scissors through the cornea and lens—and was part of their ongoing care.

Joos’ pipe dream came true when he landed a fellowship in oculoplastics at the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital at the University of Queensland Medical School in Brisbane, Australia.

“The flexibility to pursue my dream, hands-on experience, and close mentoring at Moran made all the difference,” he said.
Over three years, one Moran resident will see hundreds of patients and perform over 600 surgeries—over 250 of those are cataract. The national requirement is 86; the average is 140.

At 11 Moran clinics, nearly 40 clinical faculty, 12 fellows, 11 residents, and four interns conduct more than 142,000 patient visits and 7,000 surgeries annually, providing comprehensive care in nearly all ophthalmic subspecialties.

It is not uncommon for Moran residents to perform double-digit cataract surgeries in one day. Highly skilled board-certified attendings mentor, teach, help, and fine-tune surgical techniques. Mentors provide individual instruction to each resident as he or she progresses toward autonomy.