BACKGROUND
Director of John A. Moran Eye Center’s Uveitis Division, Dr. Albert Vitale, and retina fellow, Dr. Ronald Hobbs, were invited to teach at the February 2014 Myanmar Collaborative Eye Workshop: Diagnosis and Management of AIDS-related CMV Retinitis and Other Opportunistic Infections. They were summoned by Dr. David Heiden, a clinical professor of medicine and uveitis specialist at California Pacific Medical Center. He is a leading expert in the management of the ocular complications of HIV/AIDS in both the United States and throughout the developing world.

Dr. Heiden has been working in Myanmar since 2006 in partnership with Doctors without Borders to provide care for the ophthalmic manifestations of HIV/AIDS. He realized that with proper training, local doctors who regularly treat AIDS patients could be trained to identify and treat cytomegalovirus (CMV) retinitis, the most common ocular manifestation in AIDS patients and the leading cause of blindness. Since then, Dr. Heiden has been training local doctors to perform retina examinations through a series of workshops using both didactic and hands-on methods. In one year alone, Dr. Ni Ni Thun, an attendee at one of his workshops, performed over 1,500 retina examinations and provided 700 intravitreal ganciclovir injections, undoubtedly sparing many patients from permanent blindness, and demonstrated just how effective the local AIDS doctors could be in managing the ocular manifestations of the disease.

During Drs. Vitale and Hobbs’s visit, a documentary film was being made about Dr. Heiden’s workshops and his coordinated efforts with various nonprofit organizations to provide care for the ocular complications of HIV/AIDS patients in Myanmar.

Drs. Vitale and Hobbs arrived in Yangon, Myanmar on February 1, 2014 to teach and assist with retina training at Dr. Heiden’s 2014 Myanmar Collaborative Eye Workshop.

THE TEAM
MORAN PHYSICIANS
• Ronald Hobbs, MD, Retina Fellow
• Albert Vitale, MD, Director of Moran’s Uveitis Division

MORAN PARTNERS
• Zaw Myn Din, MD, Retina Surgeon in Myanmar
• David Heiden, MD, Professor of Uveitis and Medicine, California Pacific Medical Center
• Ni Ni Thun, MD, Director of Medical Action Myanmar (MAM)

DAY BY DAY
FEBRUARY 2, 2014
Moran physicians met others participating in the workshop, including Dr. Heiden, his wife Kathy, Joan Saffra (the film director documenting the challenge of providing eye care to those with HIV/AIDS), and her film crew of three.

FEBRUARY 3, 2014
Drs. Heiden, Hobbs, and Vitale met with Dr. Ni Ni Thun, a local AIDS doctor and director of MAM, a nonprofit organization heavily involved in providing care to those with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in Myanmar. Dr. Ni Ni Thun, through her connections with the AIDS clinics, preselected six physicians from the underserved areas of Myanmar to participate in the Collaborative Eye Workshop. She chose young and energetic physicians who have demonstrated exceptional knowledge and skills in treating AIDS patients.
Updates from the Field

The workshop began, and Drs. Vitale, Hobbs, Heiden, and Thun presented almost four hours of lectures covering the basic anatomy of the eye and anatomic landmarks important in performing eye screening exams. At the conclusion of the lectures, each trainee received an indirect ophthalmoscope and 28-diopter lens. Together, they traveled to the local AIDS clinic where the physicians practiced using their indirect lenses on model eyes. They also examined patients with a history of CMV retinitis under the supervision of Drs. Vitale and Hobbs.

**FEBRUARY 4, 2014**

The day began at the same AIDS clinic with additional lectures covering HIV retinopathy, CMV retinitis, and manifestations of tuberculosis in the retina. Dr. Vitale was very impressed with the level of preparation of the doctors participating in the workshop. In the afternoon, the trainees took turns examining seven patients with manifestations of HIV retinopathy, CMV retinitis, and TB granulomas in the retina. After the clinic, workshop attendees sat in on another lecture, learning how to perform intravitreal injections. They then watched first-hand as patients received these injections. The highlight of the day for Dr. Vitale was meeting with a local monk, who one month prior, had been the clinic’s first patient to have a retinal detachment repair performed by the only retina surgeon in Myanmar, Dr. Zaw Myn Din. The monk’s vision had improved greatly, and he could now care for himself.

**FEBRUARY 5, 2014**

The workshop’s trainees attentively listened to lectures on various ophthalmic diseases seen in AIDS patients. The trainees later examined fifteen patients, all with some degree of CMV retinitis, HIV retinopathy, and TB granulomas. Dr. Vitale demonstrated his technique for intravitreal injections, and afterwards, the trainees were able to perform the injections with close supervision. At the end of the day, Dr. Vitale led “rounds” on all the patients, discussing the treatment options and ensuring that the trainees were able to see the pertinent findings on each exam.

**FEBRUARY 6, 2014**

The day began early at the AIDS clinic with a test for all trainees. It involved identification of different retinal pathologies associated with HIV/AIDS and their recommendations on treatment. The film crew working on the documentary interviewed Dr. Vitale about the ocular complications associated with HIV/AIDS. Afterwards, everyone returned to the clinic to examine eight additional patients. Dr. Hobbs led “rounds” at the end of the day. Dr. Kyaw Nay Latt, a trainee who struggled to see a small TB granuloma on the final patient, was relentless and spent 30 minutes searching the patient’s eye with Dr. Vitale walking him through the process. Dr. Latt finally jumped up in the air and exclaimed, “I see it, I see it!” It was the highlight of the day and a great way to end the long clinic. The trainees worked extremely hard throughout the week and improved tremendously in their abilities with the indirect ophthalmoscopes. However, they still need continued practice to improve this skill.
FEBRUARY 7, 2014
Today, the doctors learned that Dr. Zaw Myn Din, the only retina surgeon in the entire country of Myanmar, had urgent health issues and traveled to Singapore for treatment. He was scheduled to meet with Drs. Heiden, Hobbs, and Vitale the following day, as well as treat ten patients with retinal detachments in the upcoming week. All hope that Dr. Din’s health improves quickly. Dr. Din has established a tremendous facility for treating retina patients in Myanmar. As a native of the country, he has demonstrated a sincere interest in providing care for the indigent patients at cost. Dr. Din is currently training a retina fellow, Dr. Kin Uu. She will be instrumental in coordinating the treatment of patients with retinal detachments identified during the workshop.

FEBRUARY 8, 2014
Drs. Hobbs and Kin Uu performed the first laser barrier to a patient with CMV retinitis with holes in his retina. This was done to prophylactically prevent future retinal detachment. Dr. Vitale examined two patients with complex cases of uveitis.

Unfortunately, the Moran team was unable to meet with Dr. Din. However, his partner, Dr. Whorstman (a glaucoma specialist) and his fellow were very pleasant to work with and are committed to helping the local Myanmar patients. The doctors convened and finalized ongoing treatment plans for the patients seen during the 2014 Collaborative Eye Workshop.

FUTURE PLANS
Subsequent to the workshop, Drs. Heiden, Hobbs, and Vitale met to outline plans for a future publication which will address recommendations for the prevention and repair of retinal detachment due to CMV retinitis in a resource-poor setting. In addition, further communication between Moran physicians and Drs. Whortsman and Din will follow the workshop with respect to establishing a collaboration to train ophthalmologists in Myanmar. Moran physicians hope to provide a pathway for the training of Dr. Kim-Uu – such as Moran’s International Observer program. Dr. Vitale plans to return to Myanmar in 2015 to teach again at Dr. Heiden’s next Collaborative Eye Workshop.