CASEY EYE *Institute*

OHSU

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Casey physician fills an eye care gap in Central and Eastern Oregon

For most of us, a two-hour drive to visit the doctor is not the norm. But for parents of some kids with eye problems, it's actually a convenience. Going to the Oregon Elks Children's Eye Clinic in Bend, Ore., is far easier for patients from towns like Christmas Valley, in the southern part of the state, than driving nearly five hours to the clinic in Portland.

Bringing specialty care to an underserved region

While most of Oregon's population lives in Portland and the Willamette Valley, Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) has long had a mission to serve the entire state. With the support of the Oregon State Elks Association, OHSU Casey Eye Institute is fulfilling that mission by expanding the Oregon Elks Children's Eye Clinic to provide pediatric eye care in Bend.

John Davis, M.D., assistant professor of ophthalmology at OHSU School of Medicine, is the only pediatric ophthalmologist serving central and eastern Oregon. For the families in this region, Dr. Davis's presence means access to specialized care closer to home. Having an Oregon Elks Children's Eye Clinic in Bend means fewer long trips to Portland for families who live in other parts of the state. Fewer trips mean less stress and potential financial burden on families. Children whose conditions require eye patches, glasses

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or medication are much more likely to receive consistent care and demonstrate improved vision when the clinic is close to home.

The unique challenges of caring for kids

Treating children's eyes presents unique challenges that differ from adult care. Dr. Davis explains, "Children's physiology is simply different from adults'. It also changes rapidly, because kids' eyes and brains develop so quickly."

Dr. Davis developed his passion for eye care early in his career. "On my ophthalmology rotation at UCLA, I remember leaving at 9:30 pm after a busy day, still energized and loving it," he says. "I thought, 'This is what I want to do!'"

He finds children's eye care especially rewarding because treatment has such a long-term impact. For example, in the condition amblyopia, or "lazy eye," decreased vision can limit the brain's ability to see later in life if it is not corrected in childhood. "In pediatric ophthalmology, we are curing preventable blindness and giving kids vision for their entire lives," he says.

Providing life-changing services

In addition to diagnosis, vision care, and surgery for children, Dr. Davis operates on adults with strabismus, a condition in which both eyes don't turn in the same direction. This can cause double vision, problems with depth perception, and sometimes peripheral vision problems. Glasses that correct these problems can be heavy, and misaligned eyes are one cause of adult disability.

Surgery can make a huge difference in the life of an adult with eye misalignment, and because pediatric ophthalmologists are skilled at correcting strabismus, they often perform these operations for adults, too. Having access to a specialist fills another critical gap for patients in central and eastern Oregon.

Building a practice from the ground up

When Dr. Davis arrived in 2021, there was no established pediatric ophthalmology practice in Bend. Before he came, one eye doctor did examine children and provide glasses, but patients had to travel to the Portland area for surgery. "It's rather unique to be hired to build a practice that didn't exist before," Dr. Davis says. "No surgeries were being performed in Bend before I was here. We had to train people how to assist in this specialty."

Establishing a practice from scratch has required significant investment from Casey's Oregon Elks Children's Eye Clinic in time, effort, and resources. But for Dr. Davis and Casey, it's an investment in the future health of children across the region.

"Having a pediatric ophthalmologist in Central Oregon is transformative for the region. Dr. Davis isn't just providing eye care. He's changing the trajectory of these children's lives by ensuring they have the vision they need to learn and thrive," says Leah Reznick, M.D., director of the Oregon Elks Children's Eye Clinic.

Looking to the future

As word spreads about Dr. Davis's practice, he is seeing more and more patients from around Oregon and even neighboring areas of rural Idaho. He's also embracing telemedicine for follow-up visits when possible.

"We're setting up a camera system in Bend, similar to what OHSU has in Salem and Hillsboro," he explains. "This telemedicine program will allow us to monitor and treat conditions like retinopathy of prematurity" for which he is now the only doctor at Bend's hospital — "even when I can't be there in person."

He is also planning outreach visits to more remote areas. "We're looking at setting up regular clinics in places like Burns and Klamath Falls," Dr. Davis says. "It's all part of our mission to bring top-quality eye

care to every child in the region, no matter where they live."

OHSU Casey Eye Institute director Andreas K. Lauer, M.D., says, "Philanthropic support, especially from the Oregon State Elks Association, has had a critical impact on our ability to open a clinic in Bend and provide more high-quality eye care to children and adults in Oregon. We are very grateful to our wonderful donors who have made this expansion a reality."

Dr. John Davis may be just one doctor, but his impact on the region is immeasurable. Through his dedication, skill, and child-friendly approach, he's bringing hope and clearer vision to countless young patients across central and eastern Oregon. ■

"Having a pediatric ophthalmologist in Central Oregon is transformative for the region. Dr. Davis isn't just providing eye care. He's changing the trajectory of these children's lives by ensuring they have the vision they need to learn and thrive."

– Leah Reznick, M.D., director
Oregon Elks Children's Eye Clinic

▲ Dr. John Davis is the only pediatric ophthalmologist for kids in central and easter Oregon.

Letter from the director

The relationship between the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and academic health centers like Oregon Health & Science University is essential to advancing biomedical research. The NIH provides most of the federal funding for this work, mainly through grants to individual researchers and institutions. In turn, medical centers like ours supply the infrastructure, expertise, resources and patients needed to carry out research that drives innovation in disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

At OHSU Casey Eye Institute, vision research remains a vital area of focus. Like other leading ophthalmology centers, we depend heavily on NIH grants to fund our work on eye diseases. These grants support salaries, equipment and supplies, making it possible to conduct leading-edge research. Maintaining efficient indirect cost recovery is also crucial to sustaining the infrastructure that supports our researchers.

Despite current financial uncertainties, pausing vision research – or any critical health research – is not an option. Eye diseases continue to affect millions of people, and delaying research could have devastating consequences for patients. Once lost, scientific momentum is difficult to regain, and maintaining continuity is crucial for progress.

OHSU Casey Eye Institute's commitment to vision research remains unwavering, even as we face potential federal funding reductions. We are actively optimizing resources and pursuing collaborations to lessen the impact of funding challenges. Philanthropic support continues to be essential, but it cannot and must not be a substitute for these funding gaps. This challenge is not unique to OHSU — it affects academic health centers across the country. Please do not be shy about letting your representatives know that our future health and those of our children are at stake, and that we should not willingly walk into another dark age in science and medicine.

We are committed to being transparent about the situation and staying focused on our core mission. Your continued support is invaluable as we navigate these challenges together. Thank you for standing with us.

Sincerely,

Andreas K. Lauer, M.D.
Director, Casey Eye Institute
Chair and Professor, Department of Ophthalmology
Margaret Thiele-Petti and August Petti
Endowed Chair

▲ Andreas K. Lauer, M.D., director of OHSU Casey Eye Institute

See the latest in leading vision research from Casey Eye Institute

Beyond the surface: Casey's oculoplastics division transforms specialized eye care

In the world of specialty eye care, some teams stand out for their dedication to innovation and excellence. The Oculofacial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Division at OHSU Casey Eye Institute is one example, offering surgical expertise plus the benefits of the latest patient-centered research to transform outcomes for their patients.

Growth in faculty and services

"The past few years have been exciting for us," says assistant professor of ophthalmology Davin Ashraf, M.D., who joined the faculty three years ago. "We've grown significantly, both in our team membership and in the treatments we can offer patients throughout the Pacific Northwest."

"The Northwest has experienced tremendous population growth, and we are meeting an increasing need for oculoplastic services," Dr. Ashraf explains. The division serves patients from Oregon, Southwest Washington, Northern California, Idaho, Montana and Alaska, with many seeking care based on the institute's reputation and physician referrals.

The latest technology

With the aid of philanthropy, the division has also been able to invest in some of the most advanced technology available. Recent acquisitions include the SONOPET, an ultrasonic device that can aid in surgery for thyroid eye disease as well as safe removal of eye tumors.

"This device gives us even greater precision for delicate procedures around the eye," says Dr. Ashraf. The division has also acquired a Cube navigation system for precisely locating ocular tumors with CT or MRI.

▲ Dr. John Ng, head of the Oculofacial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Division, examines a patient's eyes.

What's even more remarkable is that this advanced technology is available at Casey, just steps away from the clinic where patients see their oculoplastic specialist. "This level of technology is normally only

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Oculofacial plastic and reconstructive surgery team:

- Davin Ashraf, M.D.
- Roger Dailey, M.D., FACS, Lester T. Jones chair of oculoplastic surgery
- Natalie Hoesly, M.D., FACS
- John Ng., M.D., M.S., FACS, head of oculofacial and reconstructive surgery, co-director of the Facial Nerve Center
- Eric Steele, M.D.

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available in large hospital operating rooms," Dr. Ashraf says. Casey patients also benefit from the surgery center's team of specialized eye nurses and surgical technicians.

Clinical trials that expand patients' options

Research and clinical trials are another cornerstone of the division's work. Building on Dr. Dailey's involvement in the seminal trial for teprotumumab-tbw (Tepezza), which has significantly improved treatment for people with thyroid eye disease, the team continues to seek out clinical trial participation opportunities for patients interested in treatments not yet available to the public.

"Our first commitment is to the patients we serve," Dr. Ashraf says. "We're able to select trials that offer some benefit over the standard of care, ensuring our patients have access to the most promising new treatments."

Current trials explore more convenient administration methods—including daily pills instead of injections and self-administered subcutaneous injections similar to diabetes treatments—plus entirely new mechanisms for suppressing the immune response that causes thyroid eye disease. The division has been a top U.S. recruiter for many thyroid eye disease trials, giving regional patients access to cutting-edge treatments.

Healing disease, repairing damage

Dr. Ng has worked with the Casey Eye Institute Facial Nerve Center multidisciplinary team to advance rehabilitation of patients with facial paralysis as well as facial spasms due to abnormal facial nerve recovery. The combined multispecialty team approach has advanced facial and periocular reanimation to improve and restore movement in paralyzed faces. "The most gratifying result is significantly improved patient quality of life, not just in physical function but in psychological and social rehabilitation," says Dr. Ng.

The division also honors Casey's history of excellence in treating tear duct (lacrimal) disorders. Dr. Dailey holds the endowed professorship named for Lester Jones, M.D., one of the inventors of minimally invasive lacrimal surgery. New clinic equipment for endoscopic procedures has improved care before and after surgery for patients with tearing problems. This approach, done through the nose, helps them heal faster and avoids the need for a skin incision.

Collaborating for the best patient outcomes

What makes the oculofacial division particularly effective is the spirit of collaboration it shares with the rest of Casey. "Patients who come here don't just see one physician—they benefit from the collective knowledge and skills of our entire team," Dr. Ashraf says. "We're collaborative in assisting each other during patient encounters and surgeries, and we regularly exchange ideas to advance research and provide the best patient care."

As the Oculofacial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Division continues to grow, so does its impact. Two of the faculty care for children as well as adults, and three work with surgeons in other specialties including skull-based surgery, neuro-orbital surgery and orbital and sinus endoscopic surgery. In other words, the Casey oculofacial team is able to provide comprehensive care for patients of all ages. Highly skilled and caring specialists, the latest equipment and techniques and a commitment to patient-focused research come together to offer patients world-class care that restores both function and appearance—transforming lives one procedure at a time. ■

For more information about the Oculofacial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Division or to support their work, please contact 503-494-3004.

Investing in the future of eye care: The impact of an endowed professorship in ophthalmic education

Exceptional patient care begins with exceptional education. Every day, Casey Eye Institute's residents stand on the front lines of vision care, honing their skills to become the next generation of ophthalmologists.

▲ Daniel Tu, M.D., Ph.D.

Their training is more than just education—it is a commitment to our shared mission to ending preventable blindness in Oregon and beyond. Today, we celebrate a profound investment in that mission: The Laura J. Spear Endowed Professorship for the Director of the OHSU Casey Eye Institute Residency Program.

Daniel Tu, M.D., Ph.D., the inaugural holder of the professorship, highlights its impact: "Supporting ophthalmic education at Casey Eye Institute is an investment in the future of eye care, as our residents go on to serve communities locally and globally. I was deeply moved to learn of Laura J. Spear's generous gift. Her vision to enhance the training of our future eye care leaders will ultimately help us advance ophthalmic care, education, and research for years to come."

Casey's residency program attracts top-tier candidates who value its clinical diversity, expert mentorship, emphasis on service, and robust research opportunities. This endowment ensures stable, long-term support for the residency program and will usher in an era of lasting improvements. Tu explains, "Philanthropy allows us to pursue ambitious initiatives that would not have been feasible otherwise. For example, we are exploring adding advanced equipment to enhance emergency eye care triage and computing resources to support AI-driven research."

As Oregon's only academic health center, OHSU is committed to meeting the region's eye health needs. The Laura J. Spear Endowed Professorship for the Director of the OHSU Casey Eye Institute Residency Program doesn't just support education—it nurtures the development of future ophthalmologists who will lead with knowledge, skill, and compassion.

"We extend our deepest gratitude to Laura J. Spear," says Andreas Lauer, director of the OHSU Casey Eye Institute. "Her generosity ensures that our residents— today and for generations to come— will have every opportunity to learn, serve, and innovate. Together, we are shaping the future of ophthalmology and transforming lives through the gift of sight." ■

▲ Current residents and program leadership.

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2025 OHSU
GIVE DAY

Save the Date—
OHSU Give Day is May 21!

Your generosity sustains the vital and lifesaving programs at OHSU. Whether you support research, education or patient care — you have a place in OHSU's Give Day.

Our moment for health and hope is now — and it starts with YOU.

Learn more at: **giveday.ohsufoundation.org**

Oregon Health & Science University FOUNDATION

Scan the QR code to explore Give Day! Look for updates in the coming weeks.