



Bascom Palmer Celebrates 60th Anniversary

A Global Leader in Vision Research, Education and Clinical Care

On January 21, 1962, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine Department of Ophthalmology, officially opened its doors as the first center in the southeastern United States devoted exclusively to the study and treatment of the eye. From its humble beginning with two faculty members, Bascom Palmer has grown steadily for six decades, becoming a global leader in vision research, education, and clinical care.



Dr. Edward W.D. Norton (right), founding Chairman of Bascom Palmer, with Dr. Victor T. Curtin (left), Bascom Palmer's first faculty member, and Dr. Eduardo C. Alfonso (center), Bascom Palmer's current Chair.

"I am very proud of our team's deep commitment to patient care and passion for excellence in every aspect of our operations," said Eduardo C. Alfonso, M.D. director, and the Kathleen and Stanley J. Glaser Chair in Ophthalmology. "We are planning to celebrate our 60th anniversary this spring when the current COVID surge will hopefully be resolved, as we look back on our history and forward to our future."



Leading the Way

Under the leadership of founding director Edward W. D. Norton, M.D. – a superb and compassionate doctor, innovative thinker, and enthusiastic teacher – Bascom Palmer attracted talented clinicians and researchers in the 1960s who soon began making major contributions to virtually every field of ophthalmology.

For instance, Donald Gass, M.D., in 1970 introduced a procedure called fluorescein angiography that would soon become a world standard in the diagnosis and treatment of retinal disorders. The same year, Robert Machemer, M.D., performed the world's first *pars plana vitrectomy* on a Miami patient, using innovative microsurgical tools developed at Bascom Palmer specifically for the procedure. Until then, ophthalmologists had considered the vitreous body forbidden territory because of the risk of causing a retinal detachment. It is now one of the most frequent procedures in ophthalmology.

Through the decades, many more of the Institute's clinician-researchers have advanced the field of ophthalmology. John T. Flynn, M.D., dedicated his career to finding a cause for retinopathy of prematurity, a blinding condition afflicting premature infants. He discovered the appropriate amount of oxygen in incubators to save the retina and vision of premature infants worldwide. Paul F. Palmberg, M.D., redefined glaucoma treatment throughout the world by determining the proper target pressure in the eye; and Philip Rosenfeld, M.D., pioneered treatment for the wet form of age-related macular degeneration using a drug originally approved by the FDA for colorectal cancer treatment, forever changing the course of




treatment for this blinding disease.

Bascom Palmer's clinicians have also led the way in developing new surgical procedures and partnered with the Institute's bioengineering team, under the direction of Jean-Marie Parel, Ph.D., to invent or improve more than 350 ophthalmic instruments.

Bascom Palmer's far-sighted professionals are now developing advanced digital applications like machine learning and artificial intelligence to improve clinical care, while scientists in Bascom Palmer's laboratories work on gene therapy, stem cells, and biomechanical devices in leading-edge scientific programs.

Setting a High Standard

Whether treating patients with eye emergencies, opening conveniently located satellite facilities, or overcoming the challenges of COVID-19, Bascom Palmer's professionals continue to set a high standard for clinical care for South Florida's diverse population, while also serving patients from elsewhere in the U.S., the Caribbean, Latin America and beyond.

Last year, Bascom Palmer was ranked again as the nation's  best in ophthalmology by *U.S News & World Report* – the 20th time, and the 18th consecutive year, that Bascom Palmer has received the No. 1 ranking since the publication began surveying U.S. physicians for its annual “Best Hospitals” rankings 32 years ago.

“Our goal is to deliver the best possible vision care to patients throughout our diverse South Florida community and around the world,” Dr. Alfonso said. To do so, Bascom Palmer



has deployed telehealth services and hybrid visits that allow patients to receive convenient vision evaluations, consultations and follow-up care at home. In addition, the institute's Global Center for Ophthalmic Education offers online programs for vision professionals and students throughout the world, including virtual Grand Rounds using video-equipped mobile robots.

Moving into the Future

Today, Bascom Palmer's professionals remain focused on finding new ways to diagnose, treat and prevent vision diseases and disorders.

"Our scientists and clinicians are using large-scale clinical databases, 3D imaging technologies, and sophisticated medical therapies to benefit our patients," Dr. Alfonso said. "Every day, our researchers collaborate with our colleagues at the Miller School of Medicine, sharing ideas and insights, and launching new laboratory and clinical research initiatives."

Reflecting on the leadership of Bascom Palmer's founding director, Dr. Alfonso said, "Our professional team – as well as our alumni around the world – are proud to continue Dr. Norton's legacy of providing compassionate patient care and investing in world-class scientific discovery and clinical innovation."

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