

REFLECTIONS ON A SUCCESSFUL EVENT WITH RECORD-BREAKING ATTENDANCE

An overview of the YoungMD Connect Meeting at AAO 2023.

The YoungMD Connect (YMDC) capstone event, held annually at the AAO meeting, is a dedicated forum for medical students, residents, and fellows to receive firsthand mentorship from experts in eye care as well as to engage with innovative industry partners. This year's YMDC meeting turned out to be the best-attended in the event's history, with more than 300 participants, 20 thought leaders across subspecialties, and 31 faculty mentors.

This article reviews the key components of the event, from industry engagements to faculty mentoring to peer networking.

VISIONARY PANEL AND MENTORING SESSION

The event kicked off with an industry panel featuring YMDC Visionary Partners AbbVie/Allergan and Johnson & Johnson Vision (Figure 1). The panelists discussed how each organization focuses on making an impact on young ophthalmic leaders.

Following was a live mentoring session, during which participants had an opportunity to interact with esteemed faculty mentors across subspecialties in ask-me-anything roundtable discussions (Figure 2; see Faculty Mentors). The dynamic engagement allowed attendees to delve into a plethora of topics, ranging from industry-specific queries to career advice. The interactive nature of the session fostered a sense of camaraderie, forging meaningful connections between participants and mentors and creating a platform for ongoing mentorship and support beyond the conference.

"I'm not sure I have been to a venue that offered such an in-depth mentoring session as this with the breakout sessions. Kudos to the organizers," one attendee said.

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Following the mentoring session, attendees were able to participate in one of six workshops supported by AbbVie/Allergan, Dompé, Johnson & Johnson Vision, Lumibird, Regeneron, and Zeiss. Attendees experienced thoughtfully designed workshops that covered a wide array of subjects relevant to their training and future careers. Workshop topics included the art of patient communication, geographic atrophy diagnosis and management, technological advancements, women in leadership, case presentation success, and physician-industry collaboration.

The Art of Patient Communication

Moderators Joe Coney, MD, and Priya Vakharia, MD, discussed essential tools, acquired skills, and personal experiences with patient communication. The subsequent discussion covered information management, technology use, approaches to delivering difficult news, and strategies for ensuring positive patient experiences. The faculty members each led a role-play scenario illustrating a patient encounter and then reflected on their approaches.

Getting Ready for GA

This workshop focused on diagnosing and managing geographic atrophy (GA) in age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Faculty members Jorge Fortun, MD, and Yasha Modi, MD, focused on the clinical assessment, imaging methods, progression risks, and potential treatments. Dr. Modi invested the time to teach attendees how to identify pathology on an OCT image, and the workshop concluded with a detailed equipment demo from workshop supporter Zeiss.

EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

FACULTY MENTORS

- Chris Alabiad, MD
- Sarah Avila, MD
- Jesse Berry, MD
- Robert Chang, MD
- Kim Cockerham, MD
- Joe Coney, MD
- Jorge Fortun, MD
- Reena Garg, MD
- Himani Goyal, MD
- Michael Greenwood, MD
- Eric D. Hansen, MD
- Sumitra Khandelwal, MD
- Zaiba Malik, MD
- Morgan Micheletti, MD
- Yasha Modi, MD
- Julius Oatts, MD
- Joe Panarelli, MD
- Brian Shafer, MD
- Deepika Shah, MD
- Neda Shamie, MD
- Shameema Sikder, MD
- Rachel Simpson, MD
- Priyanka Sood, MD
- Stuart Stoll, MD
- Geoff Tabin, MD
- Audrey Talley Rostov, MD
- Priya Vakharia, MD
- George O. Waring IV, MD
- Mitch Weikert, MD
- Basil Williams, MD
- Rupa Wong, MD
- Julie Woodward, MD

Technological Advancements: Elevating Techniques and Approaches

Morgan Micheletti, MD, shared the story of how he developed the modified twist-and-out technique for IOL exchange and other techniques for cataract surgery. Dr. Micheletti emphasized key aspects of evolving surgical



Figure 1. Neda Shamie, MD, led a panel discussion with Tara Capalbo (AbbVie/Allergan) and Allie Holmes (Johnson & Johnson Vision).



Figure 2. YMDC members engaged in thought-provoking discussions with faculty mentors.



Figure 3. YMDC members enjoyed additional networking with other attendees and mentors during the event reception.

techniques and encouraged a proactive approach to innovation. The discussion delved into finding inspiration, embracing change, seeking mentorship, learning from setbacks, leveraging technology, and adopting the right mindset for developing and refining surgical techniques.

Women in Leadership

In this workshop, Himani Goyal, MD, and Audrey Talley Rostov, MD, shed light on the underrepresentation of women in ophthalmology leadership roles. They discussed strategies for female ophthalmologists to pursue such positions, emphasizing the role of mentoring and sharing key experiences. Dr. Goyal offered insights into achieving leadership positions in academia, while Dr. Talley Rostov discussed becoming a key opinion leader, getting involved in research, and attaining positions within professional organizations. The workshop concluded with a discussion of work-life balance challenges, addressing lifestyle decisions, time demands, and family realities for women ophthalmologists.

Nailing Your Case Presentation

Led by Sumitra Khandelwal, MD, and Deepika Shah, MD, this workshop kicked off with the speakers sharing their most memorable case presentations. Dr. Khandelwal

YMDC EVENT: BY THE NUMBERS

300+ attendees

6 educational workshops

20 thought leaders

31 faculty mentors

guided attendees through the structuring of clinical case presentations, emphasizing key elements such as chief complaints, summarizing exam findings, and reviewing diagnostics. Dr. Shah advised on podium presentations, stressing the importance of engaging storytelling, detailed discussions, and voice projection. Attendees learned how to captivate audiences, from case selection to delivery techniques, with ample opportunity for questioning.

Working With Industry

This workshop, led by George O. Waring IV, MD, and Reena Garg, MD, explored the benefits and evolving landscape of physician-industry collaborations. The

panelists discussed how working with industry shapes patient care, fosters education on treatments and technology, and serves as an opportunity to contribute to innovation. Both mentors shared practical steps to collaborate with industry partners and initiate these connections. Dr. Garg pointed out that it is important to engage with industry representatives early in one's career and noted that industry partners are eager to discuss data and/or set up wet labs to introduce technologies. In addition, the panelists expanded on the importance of accepting speaking opportunities and leveraging networks for industry engagement.

CONCLUSION

Following the visionary industry panel, mentorship roundtable discussions, and educational workshops, attendees convened for a networking reception to continue their professional and personal conversations with colleagues old and new (Figure 3).

YMDC is passionate about shaping and empowering the next generation of eye care leaders by providing world-class education, mentoring, and opportunities to broaden skills and knowledge. Consider joining the next YMDC AAO event in 2024 as a participant or mentor faculty. To learn more visit <https://youngmdconnect.com/>. ■

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