

ARVO ANNUAL MEETING



Emerging Vision Scientists Energize NAEVR Central at ARVO 2016



James Jorkasky and David Epstein in front of the NAEVR Central Booth

The NAEVR Central Booth at the 2016 ARVO Annual Meeting in Seattle, Washington enabled attendees to contact Congress regarding FY2017 NIH and NEI increases—requesting NIH funding to \$34.5 billion and NEI to \$770 million—which builds on the \$2 billion NIH increase Congress passed in FY2016 appropriations (see funding chart inside). NAEVR wishes to thank the hundreds of ARVO members who visited the booth to support its advocacy efforts.

Booth traffic included many early-stage investigators who were interested in participating in AEVR's Second Annual *Emerging Vision Scientists (EVS) Day* on Capitol Hill, scheduled for September 14, as well as those who have participated in past *EVS* events. NAEVR also assisted attendees in scheduling one-on-one meetings with representatives of the Department of Defense's (DOD) Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP), which manages the dedicated \$10 million Vision Research Program.

From left: Brian Hofland, Ph.D., President of Research to Prevent Blindness, Jason Comander, M.D., Ph.D. (Massachusetts Eye & Ear/Harvard School of Medicine), and Greg Skuta, M.D. (University of Oklahoma/Dean McGee Eye Institute). Dr. Comander participated in AEVR's 2015 *EVS Day*, while Dr. Skuta had just been elected to the NAEVR and AEVR Boards of Directors.



From left: Colonel Donald Gagliano, M.D., President, Global Medical Innovation and former Director of the joint DOD/VA Vision Center of Excellence, Tim Hornik (U.S. Army, Ret), and Jeff Radel, Ph.D. (University of Kansas Medical Center). Mr. Hornik lost his vision while serving in Iraq and is now participating in a Ph.D. program at the University of Kansas, with Dr. Radel serving as his mentor.



Daniel Pelaez, Ph.D. (far left, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute/University of Miami Miller School of Medicine) and his colleagues—many of whom are early-stage investigators. Dr. Pelaez participated in AEVR's first-ever 2015 *EVS Day*.



Prior to NAEVR's session, on April 29 ARVO hosted a session on *Vision and Traumatic Brain Injury*, which focused on the outlook for therapeutics. Open to the public, the session featured the latest research into concussive and TBI-related injuries, emphasizing the parallels between visual dysfunction resulting from sports injuries and military deployment-related TBI. Dr. Hartwick also spoke at this session, relating his research into therapeutics for TBI-related photophobia.

Cong. Jim McDermott, M.D. (D-WA), who provided a welcome, related his experience as a Chief Psychiatrist at the Long Beach Naval Station during the Vietnam War treating patients with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)—although at the time it was not yet identified as such. Senator Patty Murray (D-

WA), an appropriator and a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, also provided a pre-recorded welcome.

The session is posted on ARVO's Web site at www.arvo.org in the Conferences and Courses section under Online Education.



NAEVR's Defense Funding Session Complements ARVO's Vision and Traumatic Brain Injury Session



Robert Read, DOD/CDMRP Vision Program Manager, speaks to the crowd

NAEVR's May 2 *Defense-Related Vision Research Opportunities* session focused on how researchers can be responsive to DOD-identified vision research gaps. DOD/CDMRP Vision Program Manager Robert Read spoke about funding opportunities from the VRP and other DOD programs. He noted that, since the VRP was created by Congress in FY2009 appropriations, the CDMRP has issued 67 awards totaling \$50 million, and that shortly it would award another \$18 million to researchers from the combined FY2015/2016 funding cycle. Since a new VRP funding announcement will not issue until FY2017 appropriations are finalized, he spoke about other DOD funding opportunities, including the Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) and the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. In discussion after Mr. Read's comments, NAEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky reminded attendees that DOD funding opportunities were available to domestic and international researchers, and that those who navigate the VRP are more likely to apply for funding from other DOD programs with key words such as sensory and rehabilitation and diseases with a visual component.

Past VRP awardees—whom AEVR has featured in Congressional Briefings—spoke about their experiences in successfully navigating the VRP grant process in previous funding cycles. This included Andrew Hartwick, O.D., Ph.D. (Ohio State University College of Optometry), who is studying TBI-related photophobia (light-sensitivity) and Joseph Ciolino, M.D. (Massachusetts Eye & Ear/Harvard Medical School), who is developing a drug-delivering contact lens.



Andrew Hartwick, O.D., Ph.D. (Ohio State University College of Optometry)



Joseph Ciolino, M.D. (Mass Eye & Ear/Harvard Medical School)