



DECADE OF VISION
an initiative of the **2010-2020**
Alliance For Eye And Vision Research

**FOUNDATION FIGHTING BLINDNESS (FFB) and
ALLIANCE FOR EYE AND VISION RESEARCH'S
(AEVR) *DECADE OF VISION 2010-2020 INITIATIVE***

*present an educational briefing on breakthrough
developments in eye and vision research*

Luncheon Briefing

*“Public-Private Partnership Leading to
Discovery of Vision-Saving Drugs”*

Thursday, June 9, 2011

12:00 Noon – 1:15 pm

House Rayburn B-340

Please RSVP to
Dina Beaumont at 202-530-4672 or dinabeau@aol.com

FFB and AEVR are 501(c)3 Non-Profit Foundations hosting this widely
attended event.

**Foundation Fighting Blindness/Alliance for Eye and Vision Research
Congressional Briefing: *Public-Private Partnership Leading to
Discovery of Vision-Saving Drugs***

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How the Foundation Fighting Blindness' partnership with NIH is accelerating discovery of drugs for inherited rare blinding retinal degenerations.

As NIH Director Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D., testified recently before the Senate, drug discovery efforts that would otherwise take several years are now being accomplished in a few weeks. This is achieved using the powerful, high-throughput drug screening systems employed by NIH's Chemical Genomics Center (NCGC), a component of the Molecular Libraries Program destined for inclusion into the proposed NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS). This advanced technology enables researchers from around the United States to quickly screen hundreds of thousands of compounds to assess their therapeutic potential for treating a variety of conditions, including degenerative diseases of the retina, which is the light sensitive tissue at back of the eye necessary for vision.

Featured speaker Donald Zack, M.D., Ph.D., a Johns Hopkins University clinician-scientist funded by the Foundation Fighting Blindness, is collaborating with NCGC scientists in a public-private partnership aimed at alleviating and curing blinding retinal degenerative diseases. Together, they are utilizing NCGC's expertise in assay development and high-throughput screening to identify drugs that have the potential to save and restore vision for people affected by devastating retinal diseases such as retinitis pigmentosa (RP) and age-related macular degeneration (AMD), which is the leading cause of blindness in Americans over 50 years of age. In just a matter of weeks, Dr. Zack and his NCGC colleagues were able to identify several molecules with vision-saving potential, and they are now working to move them into animal and human studies. Without NCGC's expertise and technology, that same effort would have taken several years.

The NCGC's state-of-the-art drug screening expertise and robotics are just one prime example of how NIH plays an indispensable role in facilitating research that can be translated into life-changing treatments and cures. Without access to these advanced systems and resources, researchers like Dr. Zack would not be able to conduct drug discovery efforts nearly as quickly or effectively.

How many Americans are affected by retinal degenerative diseases?

Inherited rare blinding retinal degenerative diseases, including RP, Ushers syndrome (combined deafness and blindness), and Stargardt disease (juvenile macular degeneration) occur in aggregate in approximately 200,000 Americans. More common retinal diseases, such as AMD, affect more than 10 million Americans. NIH's National Eye Institute (NEI) estimates an annual U.S. cost of \$68 billion from vision impairment and eye disease.

About the speaker: Donald J. Zack, M.D., Ph.D., is the Guerrieri Professor of Genetic Engineering and Molecular Ophthalmology at the Wilmer Eye Institute of Johns Hopkins University. He is also a professor in the Departments of Molecular Biology and Genetics, Neuroscience, and the Institute of Genetic Medicine. Dr. Zack's research into the pathogenesis of AMD, RP, and glaucoma is resulting in new paradigms to diagnose, prevent, and treat blinding eye diseases.

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