

## NAEVR and AEVR Initiate NEI 40th Anniversary, *Decade of Vision 2010-2020* Events

On January 28, in the midst of stimulus debate, NAEVR and AEVR hosted a reception for Members of the 111th Congress and their staff. In his welcome comments, Cong. Pete Sessions (R-TX) announced NEI's 40th anniversary in 2009. NAEVR/AEVR's James Jorkasky added that the reception begins numerous events in 2009 to educate about the value of NEI-funded vision research. He also urged Hill offices to support a new NAEVR/AEVR initiative, *Decade of Vision 2010-2020*—a sustained effort to recognize federally funded vision research that benefits all Americans. NAEVR is working with its Capitol Hill champions to pass House and Senate resolutions that acknowledge NEI's 40th anniversary and designate 2010-2020 as the *Decade of Vision*.



Left to right: NAEVR/AEVR's James Jorkasky with Cong. Howard Coble (R-NC) and Cong. Pete Sessions (R-TX).



NAEVR Advocacy Manager David Epstein with Janel George from the office of Cong. Donna Edwards (D-MD)

## Vision Community Unites to Observe World Glaucoma Day on Capitol Hill

To recognize the second annual World Glaucoma Day (WGD) on March 12, AEVR sponsored a March 10 Capitol Hill briefing to educate Members of Congress and their staffs. In introducing the briefing, AEVR's James Jorkasky read from a March 6 statement issued by NEI Director Paul Sieving, M.D., Ph.D., noting that NEI currently spends \$65 million in support of 168 glaucoma studies, including the newly initiated NEI Glaucoma Human genetics collaBORation, known as NEIGHBOR, through which seven U.S. research teams will lead genetic studies of the disease.

The featured speakers included Murray Fingeret, O.D., F.A.A.O., (Brooklyn/St. Albans Campus, Department of Veterans Administration New York Harbor Health Care System), who spoke about

the incidence and burden of the disease, and Rohit Varma, M.D., M.P.H., (Doheny Eye Institute, University of Southern California), who spoke about research and treatments. Both speakers had participated in a March 13-14, 2008, joint NEI/Food and Drug Administration (FDA) *Glaucoma Endpoints* meeting at which researchers acknowledged that glaucoma is a complex, neurodegenerative disease in which detectable changes within the eye may not progress linearly or in concert with functional changes, that is, vision loss.

AEVR was joined by the American Glaucoma Society (AGS), ARVO, the Glaucoma Research Foundation (GRF), and The Glaucoma Foundation (TGF) in sponsoring the briefing, which was one of many hundreds of events being held around the globe.



**Murray Fingeret, O.D., F.A.A.O.** "Glaucoma prevalence in the U.S. is 2.2 million individuals and approaching 60 million individuals globally. However, anywhere from 50-75 percent of individuals with glaucoma are undiagnosed, as it often has no symptoms until vision is lost."



Left to right: The featured speakers with Cong. John Boozman (R-AR)

The Glaucoma Foundation's Scott Christensen announces a glaucoma screening event conducted by a dozen eye specialists from The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary to be held on March 11 at the United Nations in New York City



Keagan Lenihan from the office of Cong. Sessions and Brette McClellan (Alcon Laboratories, Inc.)



NEI began its 40th Anniversary celebration with an April 3 event on the NIH campus that featured Erik Weihenmayer, the first blind mountain climber, who is documented in the film *Blindsight*. NAEVR/AEVR will host an NEI 40th anniversary Capitol Hill reception on June 11. Visit the NAEVR Web site for details.



**Rohit Varma, M.D., M.P.H.** "Researchers are studying the genetic basis of glaucoma and using genes to determine a potential response to medical treatment, that is, prior to treating, knowing how a drug is going to work."

