

educating retina specialists / translating science and research / advocating for our patients / advancing the profession / saving sight / improving lives / We're in this together.



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LETTER TO OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

BY ANY ASSESSMENT, the past two years have been a whirlwind for the American Society of Retina Specialists (ASRS). So much has happened—and so many good things are in the works—that it would be simply impossible to sum it all up in this column, but here are some highlights.

To begin with, we've just returned from the most successful Annual Meeting in our Society's history. The gathering in San Diego truly embodied the very spirit on which ASRS was built and continues to thrive, during which American and international retina specialists and fellows-in-training from around the world shared a wealth of innovative scientific ideas and information to advance retinal care and to improve the lives of patients.

We look forward to significantly expanding our outreach with the 2015 Annual Meeting in Vienna, Austria, where ASRS will focus on providing education and insight into retina practice worldwide.

We're enormously proud of our achievements over the past few years and are even more excited about what the future holds for ASRS. Our membership continues to grow and our finances are strong. We are making important inroads into advocacy by placing ASRS front and center in significant political arenas, maintaining and building on our strong CME offerings, and increasing our reach in the areas of practice management and fellowship training by providing new initiatives such as Retina PractiCare, Retina Practice News, the Fellowship Directors Section, and the Fellows' Educational Activity and Case Log.

We hope you will enjoy reading this report and learning more about these and other initiatives ASRS has mobilized in its ongoing commitment to serve as your partner and trusted resource for all things retina.

Tarek Hassan **ASRS** President 2014-2016

John Thompson ASRS President 2012-2014





THE ASRS AND ITS FOUNDATION ARE FOCUSING THE EXPERTISE OF RETINA SPECIALISTS AROUND THE WORLD TO CREATE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS TO PRESERVE THE PRECIOUS GIFT OF SIGHT. WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD A COMMUNITY UNITED BY A SINGLE GOAL—IMPROVING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH RETINAL DISEASE.













ASRS: Ushering in a New Era of Ophthalmological Innovation

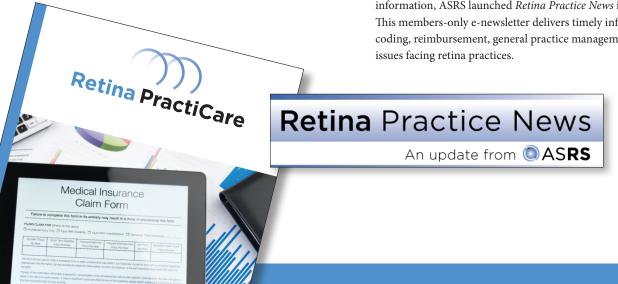
FOUNDED AS THE VITREOUS SOCIETY

in 1982 with fewer than 50 members, ASRS has expanded beyond the dreams of its founders to include more than 2,700 members worldwide. The Society serves as a national advocate and primary source of scientific education for members in more than 59 countries, in addition to the U.S. states and territories. ASRS was born out of a desire for a collegial, open and inclusive society, and the organization continues to promote an atmosphere that fosters strong professional relationships, continued learning and growth, and a dedication to patient health and innovation.

NEW INITIATIVES ON BEHALF OF MEMBERS

Retina PractiCare. Increasingly, payers are categorizing retina specialists with general ophthalmologists as they tier and narrow their networks in search of new cost-cutting measures. This has led to terminations of our members by insurance plans that designate them as "high cost providers." To advocate on behalf of members and their patients, ASRS developed Retina PractiCare, an all-payer database that collects all claims data to identify variability in practice patterns. ASRS members are now able to compare their utilization patterns to those of their peers at the regional and national levels, and to leverage this data in their negotiations with payers.

Retina Practice News. In response to strong interest from ASRS members in having more practice management information, ASRS launched *Retina Practice News* in late 2013. This members-only e-newsletter delivers timely information on coding, reimbursement, general practice management and advocacy issues facing retina practices.







With leading-edge CME activities, a vast array of online practice resources and an international Annual Meeting. ASRS is the premier educational resource for retina specialists.

Education: Keeping ASRS Members at the Forefront

THE ASRS CONTINUING MEDICAL **EDUCATION (CME) PROGRAM** consistently provides leading-edge, high-impact CME activities to bridge professional knowledge gaps and to improve patient outcomes. The ASRS CME program is recognized by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) and consistently meets the educational needs of members by incorporating the field's most advanced and innovative concepts and techniques into its teachings. In 2014, over 1,000 physicians participated in CME programs, which are offered at ASRS events throughout the year.

The Annual Meeting offers the year's most expansive and comprehensive array of educational sessions and materials for members. The 2014 meeting in San Diego drew the largest attendance to date and exceeded all previous programs with 135 papers, 220 posters, 23 instructional courses, and 61 new films. ASRS was pleased to host 916 member physicians, 329 non-members and 504 corporate professionals, representing 47 states and 43 countries. It was truly an international event.



Our Annual Practice Management Seminar continues to be enormously popular. The 2014 event sold out three weeks in advance, which has prompted ASRS to set its sights on a larger venue for 2015 and beyond.

Here's a snapshot of what attendees had to say:



- "A great opportunity to hear from other retinal practices across the country, and how they deal with the same challenges we face."
- "It was great to talk with other retina practice managers."
- "I was very impressed with the level of expertise with coding, ACO, EMR, and Quality Resource Use Report presentations."
- "The practical information on the daily running of the practice, such as coding, was very helpful."

Timely and current webinars are proving to be an invaluable tool for ASRS to educate retina specialists and their staffs on topics relevant to their practices. Hosting these events enables ASRS to connect with members virtually in real time about key industry developments. Between August 2012 and August 2014, nearly 900 ASRS members participated in six CME webinars on OCT, AMD, coding, intravitreal injections, small-gauge vitrectomy, and RAC and ZPIC audits.





ASRS.org: Portal to Learning

THE ASRS WEBSITE OFFERS a rich and vast universe of information and tools for members. This is a powerful portal for the exchange of vitreoretinal knowledge.

Spotlight Cases allow members to share their most compelling retina cases. Each entry includes a case history, an explanation of what led to the diagnosis, and the reason for the treatment chosen. www.asrs.org/SpotlightCases

Clinical Updates provide members with timely reports on clinical studies and their potential impact on member practices, along with insight from researchers and leaders in the field. www.asrs.org/ClinicalUpdates

Retina Radio Podcast Series features discussions with leaders in medical and surgical retina. Each interview provides valuable insights from ASRS members on medical research, advances in technology, and treatment strategies. www.asrs.org/Podcast

Innovative Retina Surgical Video Series is a library of videos that demonstrate surgical approaches, techniques and principles. New videos are added every month. They offer a unique way to enhance surgical knowledge, learn new techniques, improve skills and enhance patient care and outcomes. www.asrs.org/Videos

Innovative Retina Surgical Video Series **Retina Times** is a scientific and socioeconomic-oriented publication written by ASRS members, for ASRS members. In each issue, retina thought leaders



discuss not only clinical breakthroughs, but also practice management issues and their implications for retina specialists, their practices

and patients. This quarterly publication is produced in print and online, and features a wide array of authors and panelists who bring a wealth of diverse perspectives to readers.

In 2012, Retina Times added an 'International Corner' section to report on the Society's fastest growing membership segment. The Fall 2014 edition of the International Corner featured a four-part series on the first Global Trends in Retina survey with compelling data gathered from 25 international retina societies.

Another exciting addition to Retina Times has been an annual 20-page supplement that highlights the Annual Meeting's Clinical Trials: "Unplugged" symposium, wherein leading researchers participate in a lively debate over challenging cases.



ASRS PAT Survey—Taking the Pulse of Retina Practices

Worldwide. Since 1999, the ASRS Preferences and Trends (PAT) survey has measured member preferences on a wide range of medical, surgical and socioeconomic topics, such as macular disease, retinal vascular disease, diabetes, surgery and retinal detachment, pharmacology and therapeutics. The 2014 PAT survey received 814 responses — the largest response to date. Members can access survey results and analysis at www.asrs.org/patsurvey.









Advocating: For Retina Specialists

ASRS IS FIRMLY COMMITTED to advocating for retina specialists and their patients in the public and private sectors by focusing on reimbursement, legislative, regulatory and third-party payer issues related to retinal practice and patient care.

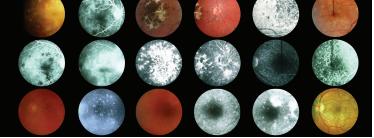
Access to Safe Compounded Agents. Realizing that members rely on safely compounded products for patient medications, ASRS launched a campaign to educate regulators and to provide members with essential resources and updates on compounding issues. In 2012, ASRS gathered essential quality assurance information from compounding pharmacies to assist members in the selection of such suppliers for their use. Since then, ASRS has built on its initial work by asking compounding pharmacies to complete an updated questionnaire that clearly differentiates between traditional compounders and the new FDA-regulated 503B outsourcing facilities created by the Drug Quality and Security Act. Compounding information can be found at www.asrs.org/Compounding.

Physician Choice of Medication. When ASRS received member reports of tiered-therapy policies, it took action. ASRS contacted payers on behalf of members to voice strong opposition to insurers that require the use of tiered therapy, when a single anti-VEGF agent (typically Avastin) is mandated to be used before an FDA-approved drug may be used. In May 2014, ASRS reported Medicare Advantage programs with tiered-therapy policies to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), prompting a CMS investigation. And, in July 2014, ASRS President John Thompson, MD, met with CMS officials to further advocate for ASRS members and to assure access to important drugs. www.asrs.org/TieredTherapy

Termination from Medicare Advantage Networks. In an effort to control costs, Medicare Advantage plans are increasingly dropping retina specialists from their programs. When retina specialists are terminated, patients are left without access to needed sight-saving care. In response, ASRS joined forces with the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) in a strong appeal to Congress and CMS to assure that Medicare Advantage plans have an adequate network of retina specialists, and, that retina specialists are not classified as "outliers" by having their utilization of retina-specific drugs and services compared to that of general ophthalmologists. ASRS has helped several retina specialists successfully appeal terminations by providing them with advice and counsel on the appeal process. www.asrs.org/MedicareAdvantage

Therapeutic Surveillance. In order to ensure safety, ASRS launched a wide-ranging Therapeutic Surveillance program to identify safety concerns, rare events, and emerging trends on all drugs and devices used by retina specialists. Reports to the program have resulted in several articles in peer reviewed journals alerting members to potential problems with retina pharmaceuticals.

Reimbursement. ASRS continues to work to try to assure fair reimbursement for the services of our members. ASRS appointed John Thompson, MD to be an advisor to the AMA Relative Value Scale Update Committee (RUC) in 2013. This committee is the primary advisor to Medicare about the relative value of virtually all services delivered by physicians to Medicare recipients. The relative value units (RVUs) are also used by most other insurers to determine reimbursements for our services. This is the first time that ASRS has had a dedicated representative in place to work with the AAO when retina related services are evaluated.





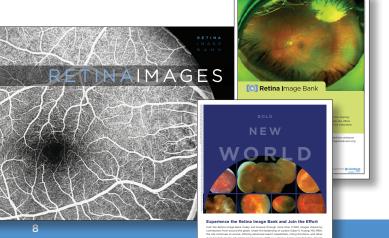


Retina Image Bank

IN AUGUST 2012, ASRS launched the Retina Image Bank (RIB), an extensive, open-access source of retinal images, videos and cases. Thanks to contributors worldwide, the RIB has grown into a library of 16,000 images, with new images added weekly. All images are available free of charge for members to use for educational purposes or to share with patients and colleagues.

Contributors to RIB are recognized in each issue of Retina FYI and on the ASRS twitter feed (@asrsdocs) through the 'Image of the Week.' In 2014, ASRS members selected the first Image of the Year, Myelinated Nerve Fiber Layer—Fundus Image, submitted by Roy Schwartz, MD, of Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center, Tel Aviv, Israel.

ASRS has also published *Retina Images*, a hard-bound compendium of nearly 300 stunning images that demonstrate the beauty of the retina. This outstanding photo book can be purchased through the ASRS website.



Fellowship Training

Accreditation and Certification. In the absence of American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) certification for retina specialists, ASRS has begun to establish baseline competency requirements for the training of vitreoretinal specialists that will provide the public and the medical community with the assurance that Society members have undertaken the appropriate training and exhibited the competency necessary to safely and effectively evaluate and treat retinal diseases. Through the creation of the ASRS Fellowship Directors Section, ASRS is creating this competency-based curriculum along with educational resources for Fellowship programs.

Fellows' Educational Activity and Case Log. Launched in 2013, the Fellows' Educational Activity and Case Log allows retina fellows to efficiently track their clinical diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, surgical cases, research, and didactic learning on Web and mobile devices (PC, iPhone, iPad, Android, and Blackberry). It also offers peer benchmarking, self-assessment tools, a section for personal notes and reflections, as well as a CV builder. It is free of charge to ASRS Fellows-in-Training members.

Fellows-in-Training Section Speed Networking Evening.

Started in 2012, this extremely popular event—akin to speed dating—allows prospective employers to meet 1-on-1 with 20 fellows applying for employment in a fast-paced format. The event receives rave reviews from both fellows and prospective employers.



Retina Young Investigator



Rajendra Apte, MD, PhD receives the first Retina Young Investigators Award from FASRS Past President, Suber Huang, MB, MBA

The Foundation

THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY of the vitreoretinal community, ASRS and the Foundation of the American Society of Retina Specialists are building a community united by a single goal: to improve the lives of people with retinal diseases.

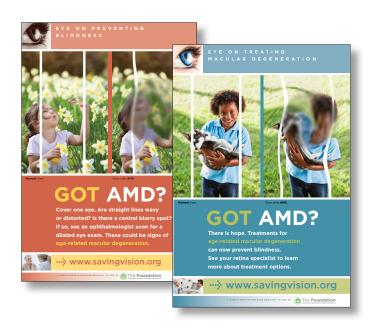
In 2013, in support of its ongoing 'Saving Vision' patient education initiative, the Foundation funded the development and distribution of "Got AMD?" public awareness posters that encourage patients to seek treatment from a retina specialist for macular degeneration. www.SavingVision.org

Free posters were mailed to nearly 800 retina practices, community and senior centers, low-vision clinics, Veterans Administration offices, hospitals and libraries.

"The posters have promoted the discussion of AMD among our participants. People have shared their experiences and encouraged others to get exams."

-Iredell Senior Center, Statesville, NC

In 2014, the Foundation introduced the ASRS Young Investigator Award to honor past ASRS leaders and to nurture the next generation of retina researchers. The award encourages investigative work in critical areas that may lead to meaningful improvements in patients' lives. The Young Investigator Award includes a \$15,000 honorarium.



Donate Effortlessly. Contributing to FASRS's important philanthropic work has become easier with the new Amazon Smile program. By signing up (free of charge) at www.Smile.Amazon.com and designating FASRS as your preferred charity, Amazon.com will donate \$.005 on every dollar you spend on Amazon to the Foundation.

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To donate, please visit www.asrs.org or call 312 578 8760.

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WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD A COMMUNITY UNITED BY A SINGLE GOAL—IMPROVING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH RETINAL DISEASE.

The mission of the American Society of Retina Specialists

is to provide a collegial open forum for education, to advance the understanding and treatment of vitreoretinal diseases, and to enhance the ability of its members to provide the highest quality of patient care.

The Foundation of the American Society of Retina Specialists is the fundraising arm of the Society, committed to improving the quality of life of all people with retina disease.