

## InsideRetina Directory

### Santa Barbara Offices

525 E. Micheltorena St., Suite A  
Santa Barbara, CA 93103  
(805) 963-1648

### San Luis Obispo Office

862 Aerovista Place, Suite 210  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
(805) 781-0292

### Research Foundation

525 E. Micheltorena St., Suite D  
Santa Barbara, CA 93103  
(805) 884-5185

### Santa Maria Office

1510 E. Main St., Suite 103  
Santa Maria, CA 93454  
(805) 922-2068

### Bakersfield Office

5555 Business Park South, Suite 100  
Bakersfield, CA 93309  
(661) 325-4393

### Simi Valley Office

1687 Erringer Rd., Suite 104  
Simi Valley, CA 93065  
(805) 813-8899

### Lompoc Office

611 E. Ocean Ave., Lompoc, CA 93436  
(805) 740-3080

### Valencia Office

23501 Cinema Dr., Suite 109  
Valencia, CA 91355  
(661) 253-2939

### Oxnard Office

2901 N. Ventura Rd., Suite 250  
Oxnard, CA 93036  
(805) 983-8808

### Visalia Office

5404 W. Cypress Ave., Suite 101  
Visalia, CA 93277  
(559) 627-5200

### Palmdale Office

38660 Medical Center Dr., Suite A-350  
Palmdale, CA 93551  
(661) 951-9519

### Westlake Village Office

31355 Oak Crest Dr., Suite 200,  
Westlake Village, CA 91361  
(805) 695-2462

### Paso Robles Office

104 Gateway Center Suite B  
Paso Robles, CA 93446  
(805) 237-1610

For more information, visit us online at [www.californiaretina.com](http://www.californiaretina.com) and [www.californiaretinaresearch.org](http://www.californiaretinaresearch.org).

### InsideRetina Staff

Dante J. Pieramici, M.D.  
Medical Director

Tamara Banville

Director, California Retina Research Foundation

Line and Ink Editing, Julia Vogt

Editor

Photo: Dr. Dante Pieramici, Medical Director, InsideRetina; and Tamara Banville, Director, California Retina Research Foundation



## EYE SIGHTINGS 2025

Throughout the past year, our esteemed doctors have had the honor of being invited as keynote speakers at various conferences both nationwide and worldwide. These opportunities not only highlight their expertise but also spotlight our commitment to advancing medical knowledge and patient care on a global scale. Here are some of the prestigious conferences where our doctors were keynote speakers in 2025:



**DR. ROBERT AVERY** presented data and moderated sessions throughout the summer and fall at several prestigious meetings. These included the Retina Society in Chicago, the Clinical Trials Summit in Las Vegas, the American Society of Retina Specialists meeting in Long Beach, the EURETINA Congress in Paris, EYEcelerator, the AAO Annual Meeting, and Retina Subspecialty Day in

Orlando. Dr. Avery was also a guest speaker at FloRetina in Florence.

**DR. ALESSANDRO CASTELLARIN** attended the Aspen Retinal Detachment Society, presented a case at Telluride Retina Film Festival, and took part in the Italian Society of Vitreoretinal Surgery in Milan. He also shared his expertise at the American Society of Retina Specialist, serving on an Advisory Board for Regeneron, and attended the Italian Association of Ophthalmic Physicians in Rome.

**DR. ANDREW CLARK** attended the American Society of Retina Specialists and Fuji Retina meetings. He also co-hosted the Retina Consultants of America Fellows Case Series, further advancing the education and development of future retina specialists.

**DR. STEPHEN COUVILLON** presented on the Port Delivery System at several key meetings this year, including events in Denver, Reno, and Arizona.



**DR. DILSHER DHOOT** presented noteworthy research and updates on emerging retinal therapies across major international and national conferences this year. He contributed to sessions in Florence and Paris, sharing data from the SAGA trial on Gildeuretinol for Geographic Atrophy, updates on suprachoroidal gene therapy for diabetic retinopathy, and long-term Pegcetacoplan results from the OAKS, DERBY, and GALE studies. His work was featured at ASRS, *Clinical Trials at the Summit*, *Retina World Congress*, *ARVO*, *Sonoma Eye*, the *Macula Society Meeting*, and *Hawaiian Eye and Retina*, where he highlighted advancements in retinal drug delivery, early-phase findings on OTX-TKI and axitinib therapies, comparative outcomes of Aflibercept dosing in diabetic macular edema, and evolving treatment approaches for Geographic Atrophy. His broad involvement reflects meaningful contributions to ongoing clinical research shaping the future of retina care.

## CALIFORNIA RETINA RESEARCH FOUNDATION

525 E. Micheltorena Street  
Suite D  
Santa Barbara, CA 93103

## EYE SIGHTINGS, CONTINUED



**DR. ANKUR GUPTA** contributed across multiple fronts in 2025: completing a charity mission to Nepal where he performed complex cataract surgeries for uveitis patients; deployed OCT-A imaging across several CRC clinics to expand diagnostic capabilities; presented a poster at ASRS in Long Beach on the immune mechanisms underlying Vabysmo-associated uveitis; and published in several journals including *Ophthalmology*, *Survey of Ophthalmology*, *Ophthalmology Science, Life*, *J Ophthalmic Inflammation and Infection*, and *American Journal of Ophthalmology Case Reports*, covering topics ranging from machine-learning inflammation detection and inherited retinal disease-associated uveitis to rare vascular and inflammatory cases, ERG-cone density correlations, and novel gene variant analysis.

**DR. DANTE PIERAMICI** has been actively sharing his expertise at leading retina conferences throughout 2025, including *Vail Vitrectomy*, the *Angiogenesis Meeting* in Miami, the *EYEcelerator Meeting in Park City*, *ARVO* in Salt Lake City, *Retina World Congress* in Fort Lauderdale, *Pacific Retina Club* in Los Angeles, *Clinical Trials at the Summit*, *ASRS* in Long Beach, *EuroRetina* in Paris, and the *American Academy of Ophthalmology* in Orlando. At these events, Dr. Pieramici contributed to panels, presentations, and discussions on a broad range of topics, including gene therapy for AMD, advanced and sustained drug delivery systems, AI applications in clinical trials, cellular senescence in retinal disease, and emerging treatments for diabetic macular edema and other retinal conditions. His engagement in these sessions highlights his ongoing commitment to advancing innovative solutions in retina care.



**DR. NATHAN STEINLE** has recently shared his expertise at several retina meetings across the country, including those in Louisville, Chicago, Orlando, Kauai, San Diego, and Los Angeles ■



# InsideRetina

WINTER 2025

## ADVANCING RETINA CARE: UPDATES FROM OUR RESEARCH TEAM



### CRC Clinical Research Team

**OVER THE PAST YEAR**, the California Retina Consultants' (CRC) research department has been involved in several important advances that are helping shape the future of retina care.

We are actively participating in multiple gene therapy programs for the wet form of age-related macular degeneration (AMD). These studies, including the Artemis and 4Front programs, are designed to deliver genetic material directly into the eye so it can continuously produce a protein similar to aflibercept (Eylea). This protein helps block abnormal blood vessel growth and leakage, with the goal of slowing or preventing further vision loss and reducing the need for frequent injections. CRC has also been a site for the Regenxbio gene therapy trials for many years, which is the leading candidate to become the first FDA-approved gene therapy for wet AMD. Building on this momentum, our site was recently activated for a fourth gene therapy partnership, this time with Sanofi, further underscoring our long-term commitment to advancing gene-based treatments.

In parallel, we are now investigating gene therapy not only as a treatment for wet AMD but also as a drug delivery platform for geographic atrophy (GA). The goal is to enable the eye to produce protective proteins such as complement inhibitors which reduce inflammation in the retina. This therapy has the potential to reduce the frequency of intravitreal injections dramatically while

also reducing the progression of geographic atrophy and loss of photoreceptors. For some patients, the hope is that gene therapy could function as a one-time treatment that provides long-lasting benefit.

Our team is also deeply engaged in research for patients with early, intermediate, and advanced dry AMD, including GA. We are partnering with Novartis on trials focused on slowing vision loss in earlier stages of AMD, as well as continuing our work in Apellis GA studies, including the GALLOP trial and a pre-filled syringe study. CRC was one of only five sites selected nationwide for the pre-filled syringe trial and was uniquely chosen to enroll patients at two locations, Bakersfield and Oxnard. This recognition reflects our growing role as a dependable and high-performing partner in retina research.

Looking ahead, we are expanding our involvement in national clinical research networks through the National Eye Institute, including new opportunities through the Diabetic Retinopathy Clinical Research (DRCR) Network. One important upcoming study, Protocol AP, will evaluate the best way to manage proliferative diabetic retinopathy (PDR). This trial will directly compare:

- Vitrectomy surgery with intraoperative panretinal photocoagulation (PRP laser), including removal of the posterior hyaloid, versus
- Standard medical management with PRP and multiple anti-VEGF eye injections.

Vitrectomy in this setting is particularly compelling because removing the posterior hyaloid is expected to reduce the risk of tractional retinal detachment and recurrent vitreous hemorrhage. The hope is that this surgical approach will not only lower the chance of these long-term complications, but also reduce the need for ongoing therapy over time.

By participating in these exciting trials, CRC research continues to emphasize the importance of evidence-based care and giving our patients access to cutting-edge treatments while helping define the next generation of standards for retina care. ■



Drs Dilsher Dhoot, Dante Pieramici, Bob Avery, Nathan Steinle, Prithvi Mruthyunjaya, Brandon Kennedy, Andrew Clark, and Steve Couvillion

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR 24TH ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL MEETING

THIS YEAR'S 24th Annual Educational Meeting was held on Saturday, October 11, 2025, at the beautiful Santa Barbara Hilton Beachfront Resort. We welcomed over 100 eye care professionals and 15 industry exhibitors, making it a truly successful event!

Our keynote speaker, Dr. Prithvi Mruthyunjaya, is a distinguished Professor of Ophthalmology and Professor of Radiation Oncology (by courtesy), while serving as the Director of Ocular Oncology at the Byers Eye Institute. Dr. Mruthyunjaya provided valuable updates on the latest advancements in ocular oncology and retina care through his two insightful talks.

We were delighted to have guest speaker Dr. Brandon Kennedy, who presented on macular degeneration and retinal care. Dr. Kennedy, currently completing his fellowship at the Casey Eye Institute at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) in Portland, Oregon - one of the leading centers for eye care, research, and education in the Pacific Northwest - will be joining California Retina Consultants in 2026. We look forward to welcoming Dr. Kennedy to the CRC team and are excited about the contributions he will continue to make in the field of ophthalmology.

This year's presentations covered a broad scope of critical topics, including several CRC physicians presenting the latest clinical trial findings on gene therapy for retinal diseases, updates on Macular Telangiectasia Type 2 (MacTel), and in-depth discussions on age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and diabetic retinopathy.

The California Retina Research Foundation's annual event is committed to advancing the field of retinal care, fostering collaboration, and ultimately improving outcomes for our patients. ■



From left: Andrew Clark, Brandon Kennedy, Nathan Steinle, Bob Avery, Prithvi Mruthyunjaya, Dong Yang, Dante Pieramici, Steve Couvillion, Dilsher Dhoot, and Dan Learned.



Guest Speaker Dr. Brandon Kennedy



Guest Speaker Dr. Prithvi Mruthyunjaya

## CELEBRATING OUR TECHNICIANS' CAREER SUCCESSES



AT CALIFORNIA RETINA CONSULTANTS, we are proud of the many technicians who, over the years, have advanced their careers and pursued opportunities in healthcare. Some have gone on to medical school and entered the field of ophthalmology, including becoming retina specialists, or pursued physician assistant programs, while others have advanced their careers in nursing.

These accomplishments reflect not only their hard work and dedication but also the mentorship, hands-on experience, and supportive environment provided by the physicians at CRC. It is incredibly rewarding to see our team members thrive and follow their professional passions.

Above: Jack Thomas (left) and Dr. Couvillion. One of our dedicated technicians, Jack Thomas, has continued his journey in medicine after studying at the California University of Science and Medicine.

Below: Carly Visger and Dr. Dante Pieramici



### SPOTLIGHT: CARLY VISGER FUTURE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

We asked Carly, one of our exceptional technicians who recently returned to CRC for her elective rotation, to share a bit about her journey:

**Q: What inspired you to pursue a career as a Physician Assistant?**

**A:** I first became inspired during my undergraduate studies at UCSB through the pre-PA association. Around that time, a friend introduced me to a family member who worked as a PA at Cottage Hospital. He became a mentor and advisor, guiding me through the application process and solidifying my decision to pursue this path.

**Q: How did your experience at CRC shape your career path?**

**A:** Working as a medical scribe and assistant at CRC gave me hands-on patient care experience and the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with patients. Since CRC doesn't currently have mid-level providers, I often stepped into that role as best I could, which helped me develop confidence, clinical judgment, and a deeper appreciation for the PA profession.

Returning to CRC for my elective rotation earlier this year was incredibly rewarding. Every physician I worked with contributed to my growth as a future provider. Dr. Pieramici, in particular, pushed me to see patients independently and guided me through learning complex retinal pathologies, reinforcing my interest in pursuing a career in ophthalmology.

**Q: Any advice for others considering advancing their careers?**

**A:** Stay persistent and passionate. The application process for grad programs can be demanding, but resilience and a genuine desire to help others will carry you through. ■

## SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



THIS SUMMER, California Retina Consultants welcomed two interns — Marin Marcillac in Santa Barbara and Anthony Figueroa in Bakersfield — to our Summer Internship Program. The program gives students hands-on experience in ophthalmology and clinical research while learning valuable patient-care skills.

Interns observed physicians in clinic, assisted with patient testing, and gained exposure to the daily operations of a busy retina practice. They also contributed to ongoing research efforts. At the end of the program, each intern received a certificate recognizing their participation and growth. ■



*"During my internship, I had the remarkable opportunity to shadow dedicated research staff, observing the meaningful interactions between doctors and patients, as well as the supportive dynamics within the team. The intricate elements that contribute to a study's success are genuinely inspiring and have further fueled my passion for pursuing a career in medicine."*

—Anthony Figueroa, Intern, Bakersfield



Our team proudly representing CRC at the LA Vision Walk.

## CRC JOINS THE FIGHT AGAINST BLINDNESS!

CALIFORNIA RETINA CONSULTANTS joined colleagues and community members at the 2025 Los Angeles Vision Walk, held at Crescent Bay Park in Santa Monica on Saturday, September 13. This was CRC's first time participating in the event, and our team of employees, physicians, and families came together with one shared goal: to take strides toward advancing research and care for retinal disease. CRC's participation helped raise awareness and support for groundbreaking research focused on preserving and restoring vision.

We're proud to share that CRC was recognized as Rookie of the Year, with 97 participants, and as the Top Fundraising Team for raising over \$13,000 in under six weeks! Some of our staff traveled from as far as Bakersfield and Santa Barbara to join the walk. A heartfelt thank you to Retina Consultants of America (RCA) for their generous match and to everyone who supported our efforts. We look forward to making the Vision Walk an annual tradition and continuing to walk side-by-side with our patients, colleagues, and community in the fight against blindness. ■



Left: Our team proudly representing CRC at the LA Vision Walk.

Right: Anthony Lopez, Bowie Remaley, Missy Cruz, Dr. Dante Pieramici

California Retina Research Foundation

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