CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

December 12, 2025





The APVRS-PAO 2025 Daily Highlights: Opening Ceremonies and the Jose Rizal Memorial Lecture

By: Dr. Raymond Nelson Regalado

The APVRS-PAO Congress officially opened on December 11 with a vibrant ceremony that set the tone for this historic joint meeting. The program was expertly hosted by Dr. Yana Custodio and Dr. Dab Rebandaban—last year's reigning "King and Queen of Eyes"—bringing a spirited presence to the stage.

The ceremonies began with the grand procession of the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology Council, led by PAO President **Dr. Mary Ellen Sy**, whose leadership has guided the Academy through a year of growth and innovation. She was followed by **Dr. Harvey Uy**, Congress President, whose vision brought this unprecedented collaboration with APVRS to Manila. Completing the procession were distinguished leaders of international ophthalmology: **Professor Hiroko Terasaki**, APVRS President; **Professor Andrew Chang**, APVRS Secretary General; **Dr. Jeffrey Lim**, President of VRSP; and finally **Professor Dennis Lam**, this year's esteemed recipient of the Jose Rizal Memorial Lecture Award.

This led seamlessly into **Professor Lam's Jose Rizal Memorial Lecture**, a hallmark of this year's annual congress. The award—named after our national hero, himself an ophthalmologist—stands as the highest distinction conferred by the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology. It is reserved for individuals whose work has reshaped the landscape of eye care through groundbreaking scientific contributions, visionary leadership, and enduring service to the global ophthalmic community. Professor Lam's transformative influence across ophthalmic surgery, education, and innovation made his selection especially meaningful this year.

His lecture not only honored the legacy of Dr. Jose Rizal but also underscored the commitment of the PAO and APVRS toward advancing eye care through collaboration, excellence, and shared purpose.

A Tribute to Dr. Jose Rizal

By: Dr. Lyll Karen Bigornia-Arriola

The dawn broke to a mildly sunny day on December 11, 2025 and the councilors of the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology slowly began to arrive together with the councilors of the Vitreoretina Society of the Philippines at the Rizal Monument. The honor guard stood at the foot of the monument, alert and ready as honored guests, Professor Hiroko Terasaki and Professor Andrew Chang also arrived to grace the occasion. Excitement has been building up for the country's hosting of the 18th Asia Pacific Vitreoretina Society Congress. This one was going to be held as a Joint Congress of the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology.

The captain of the honor guard signaled for a start of the ceremonies and Dr. Mary Ellen Sy, PAO President, together with Professor Hiroko Terasaki, APVRS President, moved forward to stand at attention in front of the monument. A beautiful wreath made of white flowers stood between them. The flag of the Philippines was presented and the Philippine National Anthem filled the air. Everyone raised their hands to their heart to honor the flag. Right after that, Pilipinas Kong Mahal was played as both presidents walked the stretch to place the wreath at the foot of the monument. Truly, this was not an everyday event and the excitement was palpable. This excitement was brought to its peak with a 21-gun salute delivered by 7 soldiers who were part of the honor guard. This salute pierced the early morning air.

A fitting tribute to our national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, who believed in the worth of every Filipino.



FRPC Judges (L-R) Dr. Joy Santos-Rayons, Dr. Patricia Khu, Dr. Elizel Claveria



RRPC Healthcare Management Category Organizers and Judges: (L-R) Dr James Paul Gomez, Dr. Frances Marie Roa-Lingad, Dr. Cynthia Verzosa, Dr. Alexis Aclan



RRPC Technical Category Organizers and Judges (L- R): Dr. Jason Yu, Dr. Marianne Carabeo, Dr. Maan Santos-Gonzales, Dr. Tin Siguan-Bell, Dr. James Paul Gomez



RRPC Clinical Category Organizers and Judges: (L-R) Dr. James Paul Gomez, Dr. Elizabeth Giller, Dr. Iya Pajarillo, Dr. Andrei Martin, Dr. Jason Yu



RRPC Basic Category Organizers and Judges: (L-R)Dr. Jason Yu, Dr. Kristine Sapno-Cabahug, Dr. Felice Trio-Ranche, Dr. Timothy Tang Lee Say, Dr. James Paul Gomez

The 39th Residents' Research Paper Contest (RRPC) & Fellows' Research Paper Contest (FRPC)

By: Dr. Patricia Lim-Tanjutco

The energy was high and the competition even higher as this year's 39th Residents' Research Paper Contest (RRPC) and Fellows' Research Paper Contest (FRPC) kicked off Day 0 of our convention. Open to all bona fide residents and recent graduates (within 12 months) from Philippine Board of Ophthalmology–accredited programs, the contest once again shone the spotlight on the next generation of ophthalmic innovators. Each entry underwent strict evaluation by the Research Committee. After a rigorous pre-judging of manuscripts, only the highest scorers earned the coveted spot to present today. With manuscripts accounting for 85% of the final grade and on-stage delivery making up the remaining 15%, every finalist brought both brains and stage presence.

Across four RRPC categories—Public Health/Healthcare Management, Clinical, Technical, and Basic Research—only six finalists per group rose to the top from a large pool of applicants. Each category was evaluated by an esteemed trio of judges:

Public Health/Healthcare Management: Dr. Alexis Aclan, Dr. Frances Marie Roa-Lingad, Dr. Cynthia Verzosa

Clinical: Dr. Andrei Martin, Dr. Elizabeth Giller, Dr. Iya Pajarillo

Technical: Dr. Marianne Carabeo, Dr. Tin Siguan-Bell, Dr. Maan Santos-Gonzales

Basic: Dr. Kristine Sapno-Cabahug, Dr. Timothy Tang Lee Say, Dr. Felice Trio-Ranche

The FRPC panel—Dr. Joy Santos-Rayos, Dr. Elizel Claveria, and Dr. Patricia Khu—oversaw the fellows' division, ensuring that advanced training came with equally advanced standards.

Spearheaded by Head of Research **Dr. Eleonore Iguban**, with **Dr. James Paul Gomez** and **Dr. Jason Yu** as key organizers, the RRPC/FRPC continues its mission of fostering groundbreaking ideas and nurturing a culture of integrity and curiosity among budding ophthalmologists. Winners will be announced at the closing ceremony—so stay tuned, and may the most visionary minds take home the honors!



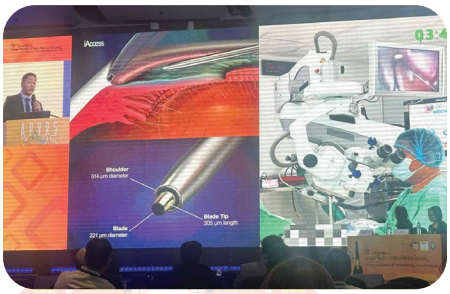








FINALISTS FOR FRPC AND RRPC



Current Practice and Future Directions in Glaucoma

By: Dr. Lee Obias Tan

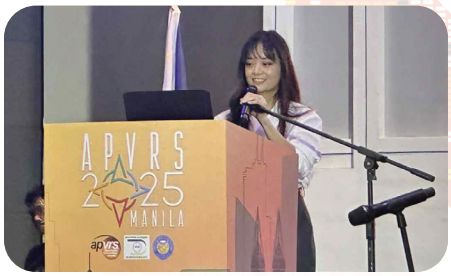
In a recent session led by esteemed Philippine glaucoma specialists, Dr. Maria Imelda Veloso and Dr. Raquel Joaquin-Quino, attendees engaged in an enlightening discourse on the current practices and future directions in glaucoma management. The session brought together a panel of experts who shared invaluable insights that could significantly shape the future of glaucoma care.

Dr. Carlo Rubio emphasized the critical role of gonioscopy and the utility of anterior segment imaging in evaluating the irido-corneal angle. His presentation underscored how advances in imaging techniques enhance the accuracy of glaucoma diagnosis and management. Following this, Dr. Victor Paulino delved into optical coherence tomography (OCT) examinations, specifically focusing on the retinal nerve fiber layer and macular ganglion cell complex. He highlighted these tools as mainstream methods in assessing glaucoma progression and suggested potential future advancements in OCT technology.

Dr. Cathleen Cabrera provided a comprehensive overview of automated perimetry, discussing its pearls and pitfalls. Her insights were particularly relevant, as they highlighted common challenges practitioners face in visual field testing and interpretation. Dr. John Mark De Leon further contributed to the session by addressing progression analysis in glaucoma, addressing the significance of understanding why, what, and how to analyze disease progression effectively.

Additionally, Dr. Raquel Quino discussed the latest developments in glaucoma medications, shedding light on innovative therapies that may revolutionize treatment options. Dr. Renato Rayel Jr. concluded the session with a discussion on selective laser trabeculoplasty (SLT), minimally invasive glaucoma surgery (MIGS), and micro-invasive by-pass surgery (MIBS), exploring their roles in modern glaucoma management.

Overall, this collaborative session was not only informative but also inspirational, as the specialists fostered a progressive dialogue that could redefine glaucoma management strategies in the Philippines and beyond.





Dry Eye Disease Management and Beyond

By: Dr. Billie Jean Cordero and
Dr. David Ammiel Tirol V

The Dry Eye Sessions have consistently been a highlight of annual meetings, and this year's Dry Eye Symposium provided a comprehensive review of management strategies for dry eye disease (DED). Chaired by Dr. Sharlene Noguera and Dr. Ivo Dualan, the program covered diagnostic frameworks, clinical evaluation, and evolving treatment modalities.

Dr. Ruben Lim Bon Siong opened the session with the Philippine Dry Eye Disease Framework, which promotes a brief yet systematic approach to examining patients. Given the high prevalence of DED in the Philippines, the framework supports general ophthalmologists in making rapid and accurate diagnoses. This was followed by Dr. Keshia Lenon's detailed discussion of diagnostic tests used to detect and monitor DED. While advanced diagnostics can improve etiologic identification, she emphasized that careful clinical evaluation remains sufficient in most settings. She also highlighted the importance of standardized testing protocols to enhance diagnostic sensitivity.

Dr. Dualan then presented a practical management approach for Meibomian Gland Disorder (MGD), stressing the hallmark signs of gland plugging or pouting. He reiterated that lid scrubs remain the primary treatment and advised that the first lid hygiene session be demonstrated in-clinic to ensure proper patient technique, likening the regimen to daily tooth brushing for gland maintenance.

Dr. Noguera expanded on medical therapy for DED, underscoring the role of inflammation in the disease's vicious cycle. She recommended early, time-limited steroid use and emphasized the complementary role of immunomodulators such as cyclosporine, which require bridging therapy due to their delayed onset. For chronic inflammatory DED, long-term immunomodulation may provide sustained control.

Finally, Dr. Christina Tan discussed emerging therapies, highlighting a shift toward targeted, etiology-based treatments. Future options include neuromodulators (Acoltremon, iTear100), regenerative biologics (cenegermin, MSC-derived exosomes), and tear film stabilizers (rebamipide, hyaluronic acid gel).

Overall, effective DED management begins with thorough examination and etiologic identification, followed by targeted therapy and incorporation of new and evolving treatment options.

2025 Orbit and Oculoplastic Symposium: Merging Traditional Practices with Innovations

By: Dr. Charisse Tanlapco



The Orbit and Oculoplastic Surgery Symposium recently convened our leading local experts to discuss innovative and evolving practices in the field of oculoplastic surgery.

This year's engaging sessions focused on two key sessions highlighting advancements in eyelid surgery and nasolacrimal duct obstruction treatments.

The first session, chaired by PSOPRS President Dr. Mark Imperial and co-chaired by Dr. Charisse Tanlapco, was entitled "Evolution of Eyelid Surgery: Bridging Timeless Techniques and Modern Innovations in Blepharoplasty and Ptosis Surgery." The morning session featured several insightful subsessions: Dr. Franklin Kleiner explored "Refining Ptosis Surgery: Time-Tested Approaches and Modern Adaptations," emphasizing the importance of maintaining tried-and-true methods while embracing new strategies. Dr. Charisse Tanlapco's presentation on "Emerging Techniques in Ptosis Surgery: Future Perspectives" discussed potential innovations that could shape the future of ptosis management. Meanwhile, Dr. Angeles De Leon delivered a compelling overview of "Mastering the Art of Blepharoplasty: Lessons from Experience," sharing invaluable insights drawn from years of practice. Dr. Gary Bunagan concluded the session with "Innovations in Blepharoplasty: Combining Aesthetic and Functional Outcomes," demonstrating how laser blepharoplasty can enhance both appearance and patient outcomes.



The second session, "Nasolacrimal Duct Obstruction Treatment Multiverse," chaired by PSOPRS Immediate Past- President Dr. Yvette Marie Gatmaitan and co-chaired by Dr. Steffani Chua, presented a diverse array of approaches for tackling this challenging condition. Dr. Jose Miguel Ambat discussed "External DCR: The Gold Standard—Fundamentals, Techniques, and Modern Adaptations," while Dr. Raoul Henson focused on "Endocanalicular DCR: Bridging Efficiency in Lacrimal Surgery." Dr. Chua then showcased the "Endonasal DCR: A Scarless Revolution—Advantages, Challenges, and Surgical Pearls," before Dr. Reynaldo Javate addressed "Nasolacrimal Duct Recanalization: Minimally Invasive Breakthroughs in Tear Drainage Restoration."

This year's PSOPRS sessions offered a forum of learning from both its seasoned and new members. Post-session discussions highlighted important points as well. It was a great opportunity for learning, emphasizing the continuous evolution and expansion of techniques within the field of oculoplastic surgery.





Cataract & Refractive 2: Innovations and Advances in Refractive Surgery

By: Dr. Marlo Jimenez

Moderators: Dr. Irwin Cua and Dr. Emerson Cruz

Pasay City, Philippines — The session titled "Cataract & Refractive 2: Innovations and Advances in Refractive Surgery" brought together leading ophthalmologists to discuss cutting-edge strategies for presbyopia correction. Moderated by Dr. Irwin Cua and Dr. Emerson Cruz, the program highlighted a central truth: there is no single perfect solution for presbyopia. Instead, success depends on patient selection, ocular surface optimization, and personalized planning.

Choosing the Right Patients for Presbyopia Surgery

Dr. Raymond Nelson Regalado opened the session by stressing that patient selection is the cornerstone of success. Ideal candidates are motivated, realistic, and have healthy corneas and tear films. Red flags include dry eye, early lens changes, and professions requiring night driving or high visual precision. He emphasized the importance of chair time for expectation management and lifestyle mapping, noting that every presbyopia solution involves trade-offs—whether in contrast sensitivity, halos, or stereo vision.

Presbyond Laser Blended Vision

Dr. Vicente Santos, Jr. introduced Presbyond, a technique combining micro-monovision with controlled spherical aberration to extend depth of focus. This approach smooths the transition between distance, intermediate, and near vision, outperforming classic monovision in binocular comfort. Typical targets: dominant eye near plano, non-dominant eye at –0.75 to –1.50 D. He cautioned against excessive higher-order aberrations and stressed the need for tear film stability before surgery.

Supracor Presbyopic LASIK

Dr. Ryan Torres discussed Supracor, which uses a customized ablation profile to induce central add power and enhance DoF. He reviewed standard and strong treatment patterns, highlighting their ability to deliver functional near vision while maintaining distance clarity. Key considerations include regression risk, night vision symptoms, and pupil size, which can influence postoperative satisfaction.

PresbyMax Presbyopic LASIK

Dr. Gabriel Juan Heredia presented PresbyMax, an algorithm-driven approach offering binocular, hybrid, and micro-monovision profiles. This technology he himself tried as the pandemic posed limited patient availability. These designs modulate corneal optics for intermediate and near gains. He emphasized personalization—adjusting anisometropia to balance near vision with stereo acuity—and reiterated the importance of ocular surface optimization and stable refraction before treatment.

Extended Depth of Focus (EDOF IOLs)

Dr. Jay Marianito Vicencio highlighted EDOF IOLs as an excellent option for patients prioritizing distance and intermediate vision with minimal photic phenomena. These lenses offer smoother vision for computer and device use but provide only modest near vision, often requiring readers for fine print. He recommended micro-monovision adjustments (–0.25 to –0.50 D in the non-dominant eye) for enhanced near performance.

Trifocal IOLs

Dr. Reginal Robert Tan reaffirmed that trifocal IOLs deliver the highest spectacle independence, especially for near tasks. However, patients must accept trade-offs such as contrast reduction and halos/glare, particularly in night driving. He stressed personality screening and neuroadaptation counseling, noting that adaptation can take weeks to months.

Presbyopic Phakic IOL

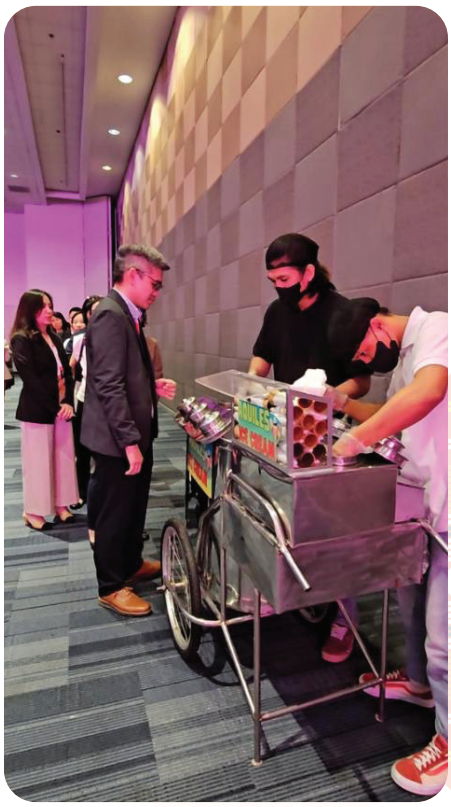
Dr. Robert Edward Ang concluded with presbyopic phakic IOLs, ideal for high ametropes or thin corneas where corneal laser or lens exchange may not be suitable. These implants offer reversibility and upgrade options as patients age. Strategies include mini-monovision or central optic modulation to improve intermediate and near vision, with expected compromises in far acuity and contrast compared to standard ICLs.

Session Gist and Clinical Take-away

The discussion underscored a multi-modal approach to presbyopia correction:
Corneal Laser Options: Classic Monovision (LASIK/PRK/SMILE), Presbyond, Supracor, PresbyMax.
Lens-Based Solutions: EDOF IOLs, Trifocal IOLs, Monovision with Monofocal IOLs.
Phakic IOLs: Presbyopic ICL for high ametropia and thin corneas.

Key Principles: Match technology to lifestyle, optimize ocular surface, set realistic expectations, and plan for enhancements or staged surgery.





Scoop Of Success: Staying Strong In Ophthalmology

By: Dr. Patricia Lim-Tanjutco

The **Philippine Network of Young Ophthalmologists (PiNOY)** kicked off the convention with a sweet and energizing pre-conference treat through **Scoop of Success: Staying Strong in Ophthalmology**. Attendees were welcomed not just with insights, but with actual scoops—free "dirty" ice cream that added a nostalgic, playful touch to the afternoon. The sessions focused on building a long, healthy, and fulfilling career, covering everything from ergonomics to mental health, financial planning, leadership, and sustaining passion in practice. Led by Session Chairs Dr. Marcus Ang, Dr. Charisse Tanlapco, and Dr. Earl Sarabosing, the flow was smooth, engaging, and as refreshing as the cold ice cream in everyone's hands.

The program opened with "Cherry on Top: Ergonomics and Protecting Your Body for a Long-Lasting Surgical Career" by Dr. James Jacomina, who reminded everyone that a surgeon's longevity hinges on posture, prevention, and smart ergonomic habits inside both the clinic and the OR. This was followed by "Don't Melt Under Pressure" by Dr. Joan Mae Perez-Rifareal, a passionate psychiatrist who shed light on stress, burnout, and the emotional weight carried by Ophthalmologists—offering practical, compassionate strategies to safeguard mental well-being. Dr. Raoul Henson then delivered "Balanced Treat: Finding the Sweet Spot Between Work and Life," an impactful discussion on boundaries, time mastery, and rediscovering joy outside the hospital's demanding rhythm.

Rounding out the line-up, Dr. Francis Lee Hok presented "Secure the Sundae," a highly appreciated crash course on financial wellness—from budgeting and investing to preparing for retirement with smarter long-term habits. The session ended with "Serving Success" by Dr. R.V. Paul Chan, who energized attendees with leadership insights, highlighting collaboration, mentorship, and taking initiative at every stage of practice. The afternoon wrapped up on a high note: insightful, inspiring, and—thanks to the ice cream—sweet in more ways than one.



WRITERS

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