The Mason Eye Institute (MEI) has lost a deeply respected and beloved professor, pediatric and adult ophthalmologist, Joseph Giangiacomo, MD. Dr. Giangiacomo passed away March 12, 2013, at the age of 71 following a courageous battle with cancer. During his distinguished medical career, he dedicated over three decades to patient care and resident education at the Mason Eye Institute, retiring in May 2012.

"Whether restoring the sight taken by cataracts or preventing the loss of sight from conditions such as amblyopia ["lazy eye"], patients of all ages trusted his skillful hands to correct through surgery what nature could or would not," John W. Cowden, MD, Chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology, said. "Often caring for the second generation from a family confirmed their confidence and respect. He gave generously of his time and talents to train and guide young ophthalmology residents, from their first cataract surgery to more intricate muscle surgeries."

In 1964, Dr. Giangiacomo earned his bachelor's degree in Chemistry from Mount St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and his Medical Degree in 1968 from the University Of Cincinnati College Of Medicine. He completed his internship at Barnes Hospital, St. Louis, Missouri in 1969; a Pediatrics Residency at Cardinal Glennon Memorial Hospital for Children, St. Louis in 1971; and a Pediatric Nephrology Fellowship at Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis in 1973. In May 1980, he concluded Ophthalmology Residency at the University of Missouri followed by a Pediatric Ophthalmology Fellowship at Indiana University in Indianapolis, Indiana from May to November of that year. Dr. Giangiacomo joined the University of Missouri in 1980 as a Professor in the Departments of Ophthalmology and Child Health.

"Dr. G", as his former residents and coworkers affectionately called him, had a hand in teaching many of the eye doctors MEI has trained over the years. He knew ophthalmology requires a special type of person. During an interview shortly after his retirement, Dr. Giangiacomo had these words to share.

"The [residents] are enthusiastic and come in smiling and enjoying their day," he said. "They can anticipate when other residents need help. A number of residents have these special qualities. They always offer to help and go the extra mile every day, even into the last week of their third year of residency. These qualities continue in their practice, after residency. They go the extra mile for their patients."

During his time as an educator, Dr. Giangiacomo witnessed major changes in the field of ophthalmology. Advances in technology have changed everything from the way residents learn material to the way faculty teaches.

"The biggest change in ophthalmology education, and in education in general, is the technology," he said. "Residents are now able to contact resources so vast and in depth and worldwide. There are videos of surgeries, full lectures, and textbooks online. The technology is invigorating."
Another area that has benefitted from new technology is surgery. By the time MEI residents graduate, they have ample experience in a wide array of surgical procedures under the close supervision of attending physicians. The most common surgery an ophthalmologist performs is cataract removal, which is one procedure Dr. Giangiacomo helped residents learn.

“Obviously the first time is the most challenging,” he said. “Residents can study videos of their surgeries and self-criticize themselves. There have been fundamental changes in the technology. The equipment is better, scopes are better, and viewing the surgical site is better, so there’s better control of situations and complications. Because the operation is now so refined, very few cataract surgeries do poorly.”

Dr. Giangiacomo had the opportunity to watch many of his students, including those he taught during their undergraduate rotation in ophthalmology, become successful eye doctors.

“One of the great rewards as a teacher is to see students who come through our program in their ophthalmology rotation as juniors or seniors and then grow into ophthalmologists and go into practice,” he said. “I’ve seen 20 or 30 students who took electives in ophthalmology and then became ophthalmologists. I’ve visited some of these ophthalmologists in practice. They remain as conscientious and as compassionate as they were as residents. It is rewarding to witness that fundamental compassion and caring.”

Former residents feel they were lucky to have Dr. G as a teacher during their time at MEI, but he also impacted their lives as a mentor, role model and friend.

“There are people in your life that you model yourself after,” former resident Michael Korenfeld, MD, said. “You might emulate their work ethic, their dedication to their family, their intelligence, their ability to know what to say, their ability to know what not to say, their technical proficiency in a high level skill, or their ability to just make you feel yummy. Usually you need to

---

**“What Would Dr. G Do?”**

*Former Mason Eye Institute Residents talk about what it was like to have Dr. Giangiacomo as a teacher and his impact as a role model*

\[
\text{“Although he was demanding at times (and rightfully so), I never really recall him being angry with me or any of the other residents. I suspect he brought out the best in me and motivated me and others to achieve more than we expected.”}
\]

**Scott Friedman, MD**  
*Retina Specialist in private practice  
Lakeland, FL  
Mason Eye Institute Resident, 1984-1987*

\[
\text{“I often think about Dr. Giangiacomo in situations where I have a clinical decision to make or am at a pivotal point in surgery. I ask myself, “What would Dr. G do? What would he tell me to do?” He continues to help me 21 years after my training, and I’m sure he will do so for the rest of my life.”}
\]

**Vance Thompson, MD**  
*Department of Ophthalmology  
Sanford University of South Dakota  
School of Medicine  
Sioux Falls, SD  
Mason Eye Institute Resident, 1987-1990*

\[
\text{“Now as I care for patients of my own, I am reminded of Dr. Giangiacomo’s probing questions and the need to really think, rather than react. That is the legacy he leaves to all of us who have been fortunate enough to have been his residents.”}
\]

**Tara Missoi, MD**  
*Assistant Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology  
Mason Eye Institute  
Mason Eye Institute Resident, 2006-2009*
look to many different people to find mentors and guidance for each of these things. Not with Dr. Giangiacomo. He was the whole package.”

Dr. Giangiacomo served the University in many capacities throughout the years including interim chairman in the Department of Ophthalmology from 1991 until 1993 and Chief of Staff for University Hospital from 2006 through 2007.

Dr. Giangiacomo’s efforts did not end with teaching; children were a core focus of his clinical service. From his research and work involving “shaken baby syndrome” to his leadership in the Lions Eye Research Foundation’s amblyopia (“lazy eye”) screening program, he strove to improve the vision of children across the country. Undetected amblyopia can lead to permanent vision impairment.

“Dr. Giangiacomo was the Foundation’s guiding force for our children’s [amblyopia] screening program from its start in 1998,” Ron Walkenbach, Executive Director at Missouri Lions Eye Research Foundation, said. “He helped set up the program, helped recruit other pediatric ophthalmologists around the State to help. He and his residents assessed easily more than 100,000 photos of children’s eyes over a ten year period. Dr. Giangiacomo also guided us on new technology, which eventually led to our current use of a computer-driven camera which does not require personal assessments of photos; the results print out immediately for the parents, in the field. The Foundation believes that it has detected ‘lazy eye’ in over 15,000 Missouri children. Dr. Giangiacomo had a hand, directly or indirectly, in every one of them.”

Dr. Giangiacomo dedicated his life to educating the next generation of ophthalmologists, providing a wealth of knowledge in cataract surgery and pediatric ophthalmology and serving thousands of patients with blinding diseases. In 2012 the Joseph Giangiacomo, MD, Endowment in Ophthalmology was created to honor his legacy of teaching. This endowment will afford support for the mission of resident education to which Dr. Giangiacomo was so committed.

“The Giangiacomo Endowment provides unrestricted support for resident education in the Department of Ophthalmology,” James Preston, Senior Director of Development at MU, said. “This endowment may be a perfect fit for donors who want to honor Dr. Giangiacomo, or who have an interest in supporting the department’s residency program.” If you would like to join us in remembering Dr. Giangiacomo through the Joseph Giangiacomo, MD, Endowment please refer to Making A Gift below.

Making a Gift

To make a gift, visit our website http://medicine.missouri.edu/ophthalmology/giving.html or make your contribution payable to: University of Missouri-Ophthalmology

Address:
Mason Eye Institute
Joseph Giangiacomo, MD
Endowment in Ophthalmology
One Hospital Drive, DCO205.00
Columbia, MO 65212

Please note your gift is 501(c)3 tax deductible. If you wish to speak with someone about your gift, contact Linda G. Davis, Department Administrator, at (573) 882-1020 or davislg@health.missouri.edu

Mission of the Mason Eye Institute

The Mason Eye Institute is dedicated to providing the highest quality education, research and patient care in ophthalmology. The Mason Eye Institute provides leadership that sets standards for excellence in ophthalmology by developing well-trained, competent, compassionate ophthalmologists; expanding knowledge through basic science research and clinical investigations; and providing thorough, compassionate care to our patients, which includes the latest advances in medical eye care.

Thank you to those who have contributed to the furtherance of our mission through your generous gifts.

John W. Cowden, M.D.
Professor and Chairman
Mason Eye Institute Faculty

**CLINICAL FACULTY**

**John W. Cowden, MD**, professor and chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology, specializes in cornea and external diseases of the eye. A cornea transplant surgeon, he also performs corneal, refractive and cataract surgery.

**Geetha K. Davis, MD**, is a clinical assistant professor of ophthalmology. Dr. Davis is a comprehensive ophthalmologist and performs adult cataract surgery.

**Chris DeRose, OD**, a clinical instructor, specializes in primary care optometry, contact lens fitting and keratoconus.

**Jeffrey M. Gamble, OD**, provides a lecture series on optics and contact lenses to our resident physicians. He is an optometrist and clinical assistant professor.

**Dean P. Hainsworth, MD**, specializes in retina and vitreous diseases. His current research includes macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy. Dr. Hainsworth is a professor of ophthalmology.

**Lenworth N. Johnson, MD**, is a professor of ophthalmology and specializes in neuro-ophthalmology. As residency program director, Dr. Johnson oversees the education of our resident physicians.

**Jeffrey Leipholtz, OD**, a clinical instructor, specializes in primary care optometry, low vision, contact lens fitting and keratoconus.

**Kathy J. Lentz, MD**, a comprehensive ophthalmologist, joined the Mason Eye Institute in 2012. She is a clinical assistant professor and assists with general and emergency clinics.

**Melissa Liepins, OD**, is a clinical instructor and specializes in primary care optometry and contact lens fitting.

**Don Liu, MD**, specializes in oculoplastic surgery and orbital trauma. His clinical interests also include orbital and eyelid tumor reconstruction, tearing and dry eyes, thyroid eye disease, eyelid reanimation, and eye socket reconstruction. He is a professor of clinical ophthalmology.

**Tara G. Missoi, MD**, an assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology, specializes in pediatric ophthalmology and adult strabismus.

**Marcos Reyes, MD**, is a glaucoma specialist who performs cataract surgery, anterior segment surgery, glaucoma lasers and other specialized glaucoma surgeries. He is an assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology.

**Theodore E. Wills, MD**, a comprehensive ophthalmologist, oversees residency training in the clinical setting. He is a clinical assistant professor.

**RESEARCH FACULTY**

**Martin L. Katz, PhD**, is a professor currently involved in metabolic disease research, specifically in the study of neuronal ceroid lipofuscinosis (NCL). NCL is an inherited metabolic disease that affects nerve cells and causes blindness.

**Rajiv R. Mohan, PhD**, is involved in research on corneal gene therapy, nanomedicine, wound healing and refractive laser surgery. Professor Mohan also serves as resident research coordinator.

**Lixing W. Reneker, PhD**, associate professor, focuses on research into the molecular mechanisms that control lens and corneal development. Dr. Reneker's studies use mouse models to understand pathogenesis of human ocular diseases.

**K. Krishna Sharma, MSc, PhD**, professor and director of research, investigates the relationship between the molecular basis for lens transparency and cataract development.

---

Mason Eye Institute
Department of Ophthalmology
University of Missouri School of Medicine
One Hospital Drive
Columbia, MO 65212
Phone: (573) 882-1029
Fax: (573) 882-8474