

**Sight Saver
Stephanie**

Fellowships

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Sight Saver Stephanie Watson Nominated for Award

Professor Stephanie Watson has dedicated her life's work to preserving one of life's most precious gifts: the gift of sight.

She saves and restores sight for many, and one extremely grateful patient is giving something back in her own way, nominating her for the Care and Compassion Medal in the Pride of Australia Awards 2014.

Professor Watson is an ophthalmic surgeon specialising in cataract, corneal and laser surgery at Sydney Eye Hospital's new Bicentennial Eye Clinic. She has developed a new stem cell therapy technique.

"The cornea has a very unique architecture to ensure that it remains transparent," Professor Watson explains. "When that architecture is disrupted, such as in stem cell failure, it becomes hazy."

The cornea is the transparent film that covers the front part of the eye, including the iris and pupil. When it gets hazy, it reduces vision, eventually causing blindness.

Professor Watson developed a technique to transfer healthy stem cells onto the cornea. The new stem cells re-populate the damaged area of the cornea so that abnormal tissue won't grow back.

Sandy O'Brien, one of Professor Watson's patients, is just one of many who are benefiting from this pioneering

work, and to show her gratitude Sandy has nominated her for the prestigious award.

"Stephanie has saved my sight many times – without payment," Sandy explains.

She has a condition called aniridia, which means that she has no irises in her eyes to control the size of her pupils, which in turn control the amount of light that reaches the retina. The condition requires corneal transplants and is complicated by stem cell failure, which causes abnormal tissue to re-grow.

"Stephanie has performed two corneal transplants on my right eye and one on my left in the past five years," Sandy explains. "This brought me back from blindness. It has been a battle to keep the sight but Stephanie has worked hard with stem cell therapy.

In April she gave me a new cornea in my left eye, as it was failing fast. I was using a white stick and had no hope of ever seeing again. But she worked her magic and gave me my sight back.



Professor Stephanie Watson

I now feel normal and able to walk around, get the bus and train and go shopping by myself, without a carer or stick. No one knows I'm vision impaired as I'm so confident and can now see stairs and go up and down them."

Professor Watson was invited to appear on the ABC's *New Inventors* program in 2009 to share the new stem cell technique. She developed a method of growing corneal stem cells on a contact lens. When the lens is fitted over the patient's eye, the stem cells transfer to the cornea. The innovation won the episode and the People's Choice Award.

Professor Watson was attracted to ophthalmology because of the real impact she could have on people's lives.

"It struck me you could make a difference. You can change people's lives, you can restore vision in people who can't see," she said.



Sandy receiving treatment from Professor Watson in the new Bicentennial Eye Clinic

She has a remarkable body of work behind her, establishing her exceptional talents early in her career.

She was awarded her PhD for developing a new dry eye therapy and wound healing model, and went on to complete clinical trials and publish dozens of articles in peer-reviewed journals. She also holds an international patent for Therapeutic Ocular Surface Medium, a novel therapy for dry eye and corneal ulcer.

But it's her direct work restoring sight for people of all

ages that wins Professor Watson so many hearts. From the little boy whose eye was pecked by a magpie, to the woman with a detached retina caused by an accidental blow to the head, to the man whose sight was destroyed by acid in a workplace accident.

These are the real people and the real lives at the heart of Professor Watson's brilliant career.

We look forward to updating you on her ground-breaking work in the future.

Consider a Monthly Donation

Monthly giving can make a significant difference to our fundraising capabilities and planning for future projects, as we know we have these pre-committed funds. By giving up a cup of coffee or tea once a week or even monthly, you could contribute \$5 to \$10 a month.

It may only be small but the accumulation makes a significant difference to what we as a Foundation can do for eye disease and research.

If you would like to become a Monthly Donor, please tick the appropriate box on the enclosed coupon. Alternatively, for more information please contact Sydney Eye Hospital Foundation on (02) 9382 7408.



Please help us to continue to develop Sydney Eye Hospital as a centre of ophthalmic excellence – your donation might just save your sight or a relatives.

Sydney Eye Hospital Foundation Fellows



Dr Guillermo Fernandez Sanz – Dr Eddie Donaldson Vitreoretinal Fellow

Dr Guillermo Fernandez Sanz started his Vitreoretinal Fellowship at Sydney Eye Hospital in July 2014. He completed his ophthalmology training at Fundacion Jimenez Diaz University Hospital in Madrid (Spain). In 2012, he relocated to the UK to undertake a Medical Retina & Uveitis Fellowship at Moorfields Eye Hospital (London) and then a Vitreoretinal Fellowship at the Western Eye Hospital (London). He is keen to further his clinical and surgical skills and to gain experience in the management of complex vitreoretinal diseases. On completion of his fellowship, he will return to Spain to resume his job at Fundacion Jimenez Diaz University Hospital.



Dr Noam Yanculovich – Vitreoretinal Fellow

Dr Yanculovich joined the Vitreoretinal team in July 2014. He completed his residency in Israel in 2012, and two years of Vitreoretinal and Medical Retina at Soroka University Medical Center in Israel. He hopes to enhance his clinical and surgical skills and hopes to conduct research into retinal surgery. At the end of his Fellowship he will go back to his country to work as Vitreoretinal Surgeon.



Dr Yochai Shoshani – Oculoplastic Fellow

Dr Yochai Shoshani started his Oculoplastic Fellowship at Sydney Eye Hospital in July 2014. He is from Israel and did his ophthalmology training in Kaplan Medical Center in Rehovot. During his residency, he stayed 2 years in the United States, Indianapolis to complete several research projects as well as a one year observership with Drs William Nunery and Harold Lee. His goal in this fellowship program is to improve his clinical and surgical skills in Oculoplastics as well as continue research. Dr Shoshani looks forward to exploring Sydney and Australia in the upcoming year.



Dr David Dudok – Glaucoma Fellow

Dr David Dudok completed residency at the Ivey Eye Institute in London, Canada prior to arrival in Sydney. He plans to return to Windsor, Canada after completing his Glaucoma Fellowship to practice as well as teach at the medical school. His interests include medical education and comprehensive glaucoma management. He believes the fellowship will give him a strong foundation in academic research and clinical and surgical glaucoma. He is excited to spend a year learning in Sydney with his family and to avoid at least one Canadian winter.



Dr Aida Mohd Zahidin – Corneal Fellow

Aida completed her ophthalmology training in Malaysia. She hopes that this fellowship will enable her to further polish her surgical skills and enhance her knowledge to provide good cornea and anterior segment services for the patients back home. She looks forward to learning from other renowned experts in the field at Sydney Eye Hospital and will be returning back to Malaysia in July 2015 to work in a University Hospital in KL.



Dr Steve Levasseur – Graham Lovett Vitreoretinal Fellow

Dr Steve Levasseur began his Fellowship in Vitreoretinal Surgery at the Sydney Eye Hospital after having completed his ophthalmology training in Vancouver, Canada. He is very excited to have the opportunity to learn from and work alongside some of the world leaders in the field of vitreoretinal surgery. After completing his fellowship, he plans to return to Canada to work as a consultant in a tertiary care centre.



A Bequest in your Will is a gift that keeps giving after you pass on

It's a way of ensuring that the assets (money, property, shares or valuables) that you need now will eventually be used to help the Sydney Eye Hospital Foundation save sight. It's something that you can arrange in addition to – or instead of – giving cash right now.

By making a Bequest, you will be in good company. Bequests from donors, like Neville G who has provided \$600,000 towards the equipment for the new Bicentennial Clinic that was opened earlier this year, have made a significant difference to our patient outcomes, with the ability to make earlier diagnoses with state of the art equipment.

Bequests are a major source of income that help the Foundation provide much needed research and advanced equipment to help in the diagnosis of Macular and Corneal diseases.

The main advantage of the Bequest system is that it allows donors of all means to make a valuable donation to the Foundation in the knowledge that their generosity will help save the sight of thousands of adults and children who come to the Hospital for help each day.

Should you decide to make a Bequest to Sydney Eye Hospital Foundation, clear instructions in your Will are necessary to ensure your wishes are carried out.

If you would like more information, please contact the Foundation on (02) 9382 7408 or email: bequest@sehf.org.au

We will be pleased to assist.



Sydney Eye Hospital Foundation Board of Management

All Members of the Board of Management are financial members of the Foundation as well as giving freely of time in the interests of enhancing the ability of Sydney Eye Hospital to provide first class eye care to the public of Sydney and beyond.

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