

by Molly Gascoigne
ASCRS Foundation Director
of Development

Geoff Tabin, MD, and Sanduk Ruit, MD, selected for 2021 ASCRS Foundation Chang-Crandall Humanitarian Award

The ASCRS Foundation announced that Geoff Tabin, MD, and Sanduk Ruit, MD, are the 2021 Chang-Crandall Humanitarian Award winners. Endowed by a generous gift from David and Victoria Chang, and presented each year at the ASCRS Annual Meeting, the ASCRS Foundation Chang-Crandall Humanitarian Award was established to honor and recognize outstanding humanitarian work with a focus on cataract blindness and disability. The ASCRS Foundation renamed its highest honor the Chang-Crandall Humanitarian Award in posthumous recognition of the exemplary life and commitment to charitable service of Alan Crandall, MD.

A \$50,000 prize is awarded to a charitable ophthalmology organization of the winner's choosing. Out of more than 85 nominations submitted, Drs. Tabin and Ruit received the highest vote totals from the nominating committee, and the ASCRS Foundation Board chose to name them co-winners. David and Victoria Chang will double the award to \$100,000 this year.

Drs. Tabin and Ruit embody the spirit of the award through their 25-year dedication to humanitarian work in some of the most impoverished areas of the Himalayas and Sub-Saharan Africa.

"Geoff and Sanduk have not only delivered exceptional eyecare in the Himalayan region but have created the infrastructure to sustain continuous care by educating and empowering the community," said Ann Kelman, member of the nominating committee. "They generously share best practices learned from their experiences to inspire others to work in underserved communities around the world."

Dr. Tabin is the co-founder and chairman of the Himalayan Cataract Project and Professor of Ophthalmology and Global Medicine at Stanford University.

"A man and physician with unmatched energy and vision and an infectious passion for the possible, Dr. Tabin has spent his entire ophthalmic career traveling, partnering, teaching, serving, and advocating for the millions of people who are unnecessarily blind," said Eric Hansen,



Drs. Tabin, Ruit, and Crandall at Dr. Tabin's wedding in 2018
Source: Geoff Tabin, MD

MD. "He is a curious, intelligent, adventurous young man who found success in the world of mountaineering and through those experiences discovered the dire need for eyecare and the miracle of cataract surgery."

Dr. Tabin is the fourth person in the world to reach the tallest peak on each of the seven continents. His passion for mountain climbing directly influenced his medical career. After summiting Mount Everest, he later came across a Dutch team performing cataract surgery on a woman who had been needlessly blind for 3 years. It was then he understood his life's calling.

Dr. Tabin graduated from Yale University and earned a MA in Philosophy at Oxford University on a Marshall Scholarship. He then earned his MD from Harvard Medical School. After completing an ophthalmology residency at Brown University and a fellowship in corneal surgery in Melbourne, Australia, Dr. Tabin returned to Nepal to work with Dr. Ruit.

Dr. Ruit's mission has been to provide world-class eyecare to patients, regardless of ability to pay. A masterful surgeon, he regularly performs dozens of small incision surgeries on mature cataracts in eye camps over the course of a 12-hour day.

Dr. Ruit was born in a remote village in Eastern Nepal. His sister died of tuberculosis when he was 17, leading him to become a doctor. After completing a 3-year ophthalmology

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Contact

Gascoigne:
mgascoigne@ascrs.org



Review of “Quantifying the educational benefit of additional cataract surgery cases in ophthalmology residency”

Achieving competency in cataract surgery is an essential component of ophthalmology residency training. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) mandates that trainees perform at least 86 cataract surgeries during residency, with most residents surpassing this minimum.¹ Between 2009 and 2015, the average number of phacoemulsification cases performed by residents as primary surgeon steadily rose from 144 to 174.²

Despite this increase in cataract surgical caseloads, the number of cases needed for a resident to achieve competency remains unknown. Identification of an optimal cataract surgical caseload is of particular interest for residency training programs; ophthalmic

residency curriculum design must strike a balance between ensuring adequate cataract surgical volume to produce competent surgeons and facilitating other educational experiences to prepare residents for independent practice.

While most young ophthalmologists express confidence in their ability to perform unsupervised cataract surgery upon graduation, many think that their exposure to other important surgical techniques during residency is lacking.³ Surveys of young eye surgeons showed that the majority had never performed corneal relaxing incisions or laser vision correction.⁴ Fewer than half of respondents thought that they had received adequate training in capsular tension rings, and only 35% reported that they were

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residency at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi, India, Dr. Ruit returned to Nepal.

It was while working on a Nepal Blindness Survey that Dr. Ruit chose his life’s path: to restore sight to those unnecessarily blind. He was the first Nepali doctor to implant IOLs, and he pioneered a manual, small incision method for delivering high-volume, cost-effective cataract surgeries in remote eye camps to which his team must often trek on foot. In 1994, he founded the Tilganga Eye Center in Kathmandu, which treats 6,000 patients a week and provides much of the country’s subspecialty eyecare.

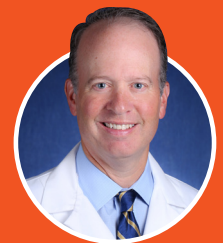
“Dr. Ruit is an extraordinary leader who has impacted how ophthalmic care is delivered in both the developing and developed worlds,” said Kuldev Singh, MD. “His commitment to decreasing morbidity from human disease in his home country of Nepal is truly inspirational. Ophthalmology has been blessed with several outstanding visionaries who have brought modern cataract surgery to underserved communities. What makes Sanduk truly special is his personal dedication and sacrifice in bringing his vision to fruition.”

Drs. Tabin and Ruit established the Himalayan Cataract Project in 1995, vowing to eliminate preventable and treatable blindness from the Himalayan region in their lifetime, a goal, in Dr. Tabin’s words, “more audacious than setting out to make the first ascent of the East Face of Mount Everest.” Their programs train and support ophthalmologists throughout Southeast Asia and Africa.

“It gives us great joy to receive this incredible honor that is associated with two of our heroes, David Chang and the late Alan Crandall—legends of global medicine and among the most dedicated and kindest ophthalmologists we know. We stand on the shoulders of so many giants who’ve taught and inspired us and are excited to continue working with the ASCRS Foundation and its members to overcome the travesty of needless blindness in our world,” Drs. Tabin and Ruit said.

Drs. Tabin and Ruit have earmarked the financial prize to the Himalayan Cataract Project/CureBlindness.org for their work in overcoming needless blindness in Nepal. ●

by Alexa Thibodeau, MD,
and Bradford Tannen,
MD



Bradford Tannen, MD
Residency Program Director
Kellogg Eye Center
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan



Alexa Thibodeau, MD
Resident
Kellogg Eye Center
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan