Florida Research Leader Presented Groundbreaking Advancements in the Fight Against Blinding Eye Disease

This week, a Florida-based research and transplant leader with offices in Orlando presented two pioneering studies at the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology conference. The Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research, the world’s only combined eye bank and ocular research center, collaborated with two major research universities to uncover results altering eye donor and eye disease exploration.

“We were happy to see the conference come to Orlando and we were pleased to share our findings with the ARVO attendees. We believe these developments get us one step closer in the fight against blinding eye disease,” said Jason Woody, president and CEO of LEITR. “ARVO is such an asset because we always leave with connections that generate more collaboration among industry and academia leaders.”

This year, the LEITR team along with its new scientific director, Dr. Mitch McCartney, presented two studies:

1. The first study was completed with the University of Florida and focused on the exploration of transplant criteria. This study could complement corneal tissue evaluation and expand the ability for more people to become donors. This would result in more tissue that could be used as part of the transplant process – ultimately helping more people receive transplants that would help them regain sight.

2. The second study reviewed ways to help those suffering with age-related macular degeneration – a disease affecting more than two million people. Working with the University of South Florida, LEITR explored using an ultrasound process that could identify earlier signs of age-related macular degeneration. Currently, the majority of AMD cases are not caught until later stages.

“At the inception of the first study, we believed that good cornea tissue may have been excluded from the transplantation process because of early signs of certain sputum cultures. But, in reality, our research showed that those early signs did not result in growth – even after multiple days of incubation,” said Dr. McCartney. “The second study is the first time, to our knowledge, that anyone has used ultrasound methods to look at the retina. This method will help explore how AMD progresses and open up doors for future research.”

ARVO was held at the Orlando Convention Center in Orlando from May 4-8. ARVO is the largest and most respected eye and vision research organization in the world. ARVO members include more than 12,750 researchers from more than 80 countries.

About the Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research (LEITR)

The Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research, Inc. (LEITR) is a nonprofit, charitable organization dedicated to the recovery, evaluation and distribution of eye tissue for transplantation, research and education. LEITR’s Eye Bank, located in Tampa, Fla., is the only combined eye bank and ocular research center in the world. Since its inception, it has brought the “Gift of Sight” to more than 60,000 men, women and children worldwide. For more information, visit www.lionseyeinstitute.org.