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ACMG Foundation Receives Gift from Spark Therapeutics for Ophthalmic Genetics Fellowships:

Gift Marks the First Time the ACMG Foundation has Allocated an Award for Training in Ophthalmic Genetics.

BETHESDA, MD – December 7, 2021 | The ACMG Foundation for Genetic and Genomic Medicine (www.acmgfoundation.org) announced that it has received a commitment from Spark Therapeutics, Inc. to fund two fellowship training awards in ophthalmic genetics through its Next Generation Fellowship & Training Awards Program. This is the first time in its history that the ACMG Foundation will provide funding for training in this rapidly advancing area of specialty in medical genetics and genomics.

The ACMG Foundation's Next Generation Fellowship & Training Awards Program has worked to address a shortage of medical genetics experts needed to diagnose and treat patients with genetic disorders. To date, the program has funded a total of 60 years of study in genetic and genomic medicine to highly qualified medical students. The partnership between the ACMG Foundation and Spark Therapeutics will help foster medical genetics and genomics expertise for physicians seeking to specialize in the evaluation, diagnosis, and management of genetic eye disease.

"I am delighted to announce the generous gift from Spark Therapeutics, Inc. to fund two fellowship positions in ophthalmic genetics with an emphasis on inherited retinal diseases," said Max Muenke, MD, FACMG, CEO of the American College of Genetics and Genomics. "Healthcare professionals experienced in ophthalmic genetics have been at the forefront of helping individuals and families affected with inherited eye diseases. Recent successes in discovering genetic variants and conditions known to contribute to eye disorders and developing and delivering gene therapies for specific eye conditions have the potential of not just managing but laying a foundation towards curing these disorders. With the continually evolving advances in genetics and genomics, we need many more ophthalmologists trained in managing hereditary eye diseases and utilizing these novel treatment modalities."

"As we work together to advance novel treatment options for people and families affected by genetic diseases, it is increasingly important that we continue to build on our foundation and understanding of genetics across the healthcare community," said Bartholomew Tortella, MD, FACS, FCCM, and head of medical affairs, Spark Therapeutics. "Diagnosing and treating inherited eye diseases is complex, and programs such as the ACMG Foundation fellowship focused on ophthalmic genetics are a step forward in supporting patient communities."

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Bruce R. Korf, MD, PhD, FACMG, president of the ACMG Foundation said, “A remarkably high proportion of retinal disorders have a genetic basis. Training specialists who are able to use the powerful approaches of genetic and genomic medicine in this area not only will benefit patients with genetic eye disorders but serves as a model for the integration of genetics and genomics across all of medicine.”

The ACMG Foundation has stated it is eager to also work with other specialties to ensure that pediatricians, oncologists, obstetricians and other specialties are able to add genetic studies to their years of schooling.

About the ACMG Foundation for Genetic and Genomic Medicine

The ACMG Foundation for Genetic and Genomic Medicine, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is a community of supporters and contributors who understand the importance of medical genetics and genomics in healthcare. Established in 1992, the ACMG Foundation supports the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG) mission to “translate genes into health.” Through its work, the ACMG Foundation fosters charitable giving, promotes training opportunities to attract future medical geneticists and genetic counselors to the field, shares information about medical genetics and genomics, and sponsors important research. To learn more and support the ACMG Foundation mission to create “Better Health through Genetics” visit www.acmgfoundation.org.

Note to editors: To arrange interviews with experts in medical genetics, contact ACMG Senior Director of Communications and Public Relations, Kathy Moran, MBA at kmoran@acmg.net.

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