

The Case for Research to Prevent



Research to Prevent Blindness
www.rpbusa.org

Perspective

The current epidemic of eye disease will continue its surge as our country's population ages.

More than six million Americans are newly diagnosed each year as having a serious visual affliction.

Age-related eye diseases—macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataract and diabetic retinopathy—threaten the sight of more than 119 million Americans over the age of 40. Other eye conditions such as uveitis, corneal disorders and amblyopia threaten millions more.



It is a tragic fact that, in 8 out of 10 cases, loss of sight results from diseases which can not yet be prevented or cured. The staggering costs of caring

for the visually impaired and those already blind in this country is estimated at \$68 billion per year. Only a tiny fraction of that amount is expended to eradicate the diseases that cause blindness.

RPB's Focus on Eye Research

Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB) is the world's leading voluntary organization in support of eye research. Unlike any other public foundation, RPB attacks the problem of blindness at its very core by seeking to ameliorate or eradicate all the diseases that threaten vision.

RPB's research effort covers virtually every serious eye disease including, but not limited to:

- Macular Degeneration
- Cataracts
- Glaucoma
- Diabetic Retinopathy
- Dry Eye
- Corneal Diseases
- Uveitis
- Myopia
- Amblyopia and Strabismus
- Retinitis Pigmentosa
- Retinal Detachment

In pursuit of its objective, *RPB has committed hundreds of millions of dollars* in grant support to provide scientific personnel, technological equipment and eye research laboratory facilities.

Focus *(continued)*

Today, RPB provides major eye research funding to more than 50 leading scientific institutions in the U.S. and supports the work of hundreds of talented vision scientists engaged in a diverse range of disease-oriented research. RPB's clinical and basic research grants are designated on a highly competitive basis to scientists at virtually every stage in their career—from medical school fellowships through mid-career and senior scientific investigator awards.



RPB's premier award is its Jules and Doris Stein Professorship which provides up to \$625,000 payable over seven years to attract eminent basic scientists into a clinical eye research environment.

In the Beginning...

The idea of creating Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB) as a public foundation was conceived in the late 1950s. It was founded in 1960 by Dr. Jules Stein in concert with a few other distinguished leaders and philanthropic associates.* He had been trained as an ophthalmologist but gave up the practice many years earlier to establish MCA†, which had become the nation's leading corporation in the entertainment industry.

Dr. Stein and his colleagues were aware that several hundred organizations nationwide were spending billions of dollars to provide services to the blind and visually impaired. They also knew that there wasn't a single major organization dedicated to eradicating the many diseases that cause blindness.



Jules Stein, M.D. 1896-1981

* James S. Adams, Mary W. Lasker, Robert E. McCormick, William J. vanden Heuvel and Lew R. Wasserman

† Music Corporation of America, renamed Universal Studios, Inc., now a subsidiary of General Electric

Beginning *(continued)*

They immediately set out to determine whether there was a genuine need for such an organization and whether there was sufficient public interest to support it. To assess the need, they sponsored the first national public opinion poll which indicated that Americans feared blindness more than any physical affliction other than cancer. Next, they initiated the first and only exhaustive survey of eye research in the U.S. which exposed a shocking lack of laboratory space and a severe shortage of scientific personnel.

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Only 15 ophthalmologists and 37 basic scientists in the entire country were engaged in vision research. Fewer than half our medical schools provided space for eye research. Their equipment was antiquated and space was cramped.

Beginning *(continued)*

In addition to inadequate laboratory facilities and a lack of trained personnel, the study also uncovered an urgent need for unrestricted funds to support promising projects.

RPB moved quickly to attract both clinical and basic scientists to careers in eye research laboratories.

Through a generous bequest to RPB, Dr. Stein established a restricted endowment fund to provide a stable income allowing the foundation to develop and pursue basic, long-term research objectives without fear of interruption for lack of funding. Realizing the importance of stimulating public support to create a truly dynamic research effort, he vigorously encouraged gifts from individuals and other non-governmental sources. To inspire public support, Dr. Stein established an additional legacy: On an annual basis, all gifts to RPB are matched up to a total of one million dollars, effectively doubling the value of contributions from others.

Beginning *(continued)*

In 1961, RPB launched a unique laboratory construction program with such resounding success that it led to the coast-to-coast development of modern eye institutes serving millions of Americans across the entire United States. A few years later, RPB initiated and spearheaded the movement which created the National Eye Institute (NEI) within the National Institutes of Health.

Today

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Millions of Americans enjoy the gift of sight as a result of advanced treatment procedures stimulated by RPB research. Such advances include:

- intraocular lenses to improve sight following cataract extraction;
- the adaptation of the laser for ophthalmic surgery which now serves to treat macular degeneration, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and myopia;
- compounds to seal and block the growth of damaging, leaky blood vessels in macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy; and
- nutritional findings connected to the preservation of vision.

Economy and Efficiency: *An RPB Tradition*

RPB has established important new patterns in the economical and efficient financing of health research. *Its professional staff is the smallest among all major organizations in the voluntary health field.*

RPB neither seeks nor accepts funds from any governmental source. It does not conduct expensive mass mailing campaigns but, rather, relies on bequests and selective appeals to interested individuals, corporations and private foundations to support its research effort. As a result, since RPB's establishment in 1960, it has enjoyed a low fund-raising expense ratio of less than 2% thus assuring that the contributor's gift is maximized for eye research purposes.



Economy *(continued)*

RPB's far-reaching activities are planned and carried out with expert advice and guidance of a Scientific Advisory Panel composed of distinguished leaders in the field of medical science. The organization has won the respect and approval of eminent eye specialists and scientists.

Investigators across the nation rely on RPB's support to conduct breakthrough research. Last year alone, more than one thousand scientific reports, published in leading periodicals, cited funding from RPB.



RPB is a tax-exempt public charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Gifts of cash and property to RPB are deductible for income tax purposes.

RPB's Mission

Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB) is committed to stimulate, sustain and intensify a concerted research assault, with the goal of developing preventives, cures and effective treatments for all diseases of the visual system that damage and destroy sight. RPB mobilizes financial resources in support of eye research making available essential laboratory space, scientific personnel and advanced technological equipment in its mission to preserve vision and restore sight.

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Anyone wishing information concerning current research findings related to a specific eye disease may contact RPB at the address sites on the back of this pamphlet. To obtain a full description of RPB's programs, its audited financial statements and a listing of the volunteers who serve on its Board of Trustees and Scientific Advisory Committees, please ask for RPB's Annual Report.



Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB) has led the way for over forty years to dramatic advances in eye care. These breakthroughs have saved the sight or restored useful vision to millions throughout the world. But more has to be done, and RPB is counting on you.

Your donation can help us continue our extensive research program. Every gift is important.

To donate or for further information on RPB, or any eye disease, visit www.rpbusa.org.

You can also reach us at:

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RPB's latest annual report may be obtained, upon request, from RPB or from the Office of the Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, New York 10271.