

**University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital
Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences (UP-PGH DOVS):
A 65-year Legacy Pioneering the Future of Vision Care for Filipinos**

In an archipelago of 7,641 islands, geography has long dictated access to healthcare for Filipinos. Compounded by socio-economic challenges and a fractured political and healthcare system, we are left with a silent crisis: many Filipinos suffering from preventable vision loss or disability, simply because specialized care arrived too late.¹

Training more specialists and sending them to remote areas may be the most apparent solution. But this takes years, even decades, and is heavily influenced by behavioral economics and personal preferences of the graduates. Instead, integrating technological innovation with extensive clinical experience appears to be another sensible route. If this path is to be taken, however, one must proceed with due diligence and caution. Deploying high-tech solutions requires trusted clinical leadership, rigorous validation, and ethical oversight. This is where the UP-PGH DOVS can lead the way.

As eye care transitions into the digital age, the 65- year legacy of UP-PGH DOVS provides an excellent foundation for clinical validation, standardization of protocols, capacity building, and quality assurance. Evidenced by the work displayed in this Ophthalmology Issue...

We celebrate 65 years of experience:

- Detecting and documenting atypical presentations
- Establishing population profiles
- Illustrating long-term outcomes of treatment
- Identifying lapses and gaps in healthcare service delivery

We celebrate 65 years of discovery:

- Reviewing and updating practice patterns
- Finding ways to make diagnostic procedures less traumatic for patients

We celebrate 65 years of innovation:

- Modifying surgical approaches
- Utilizing technology for case detection in potentially blinding disease
- Exploring alternative means of communicating with patients and delivering eye care through telemedicine

Being a long-established ophthalmology training institution within an apex hospital and academic center, UP-PGH DOVS holds a strategic position, right at the intersection of high patient volume, clinical expertise, research infrastructure, and educational authority. Rather than merely adopting new technology, it has the means to direct, validate, and scale advancements in the field.

It serves as an abundant “real-world testing ground,” with its high volume of diverse data. Data that come from actual patients with eye conditions ranging from rare and complex to common. This yields rich and ethically sourced datasets – from fundus imaging, visual field tests, and clinical examination findings – which are essential for training and validating artificial intelligence models.^{1,2}



eISSN 2094-9278 (Online)
Published: September 15, 2026
<https://doi.org/10.47895/amp.v60i17.14709>
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It is a venue for conducting rigorous clinical trials, backed by the well-established research infrastructure of the University of the Philippines Manila National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Philippine Eye Research Institute (PERI), and the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital (UP-PGH). Reputable institutional review boards and research support teams adhering to the principles of good clinical practice (GCP) are all within reach.

It is a center for physician-engineered solutions through partnerships between clinicians and scientists with varied fields of expertise, engineers, and the UP Manila Discovery and Innovation Hub - all part of the intellectually rich ecosystem of the University of the Philippines. Here, the gap between “cool tech” and clinical necessity can be bridged.

It is a credible institution for establishing standards of care, particularly with regard to technology tools that need expert validation before wide deployment. It can lead comparative studies matching machine algorithms against subspecialist graders to establish accuracy and bias benchmarks.^{2,3}

In addition, many members of its roster of faculty serve on national advisory panels such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Department of Health (DOH), or hold key leadership positions in national and international professional societies, research and academic institutions that set guidelines for policies and regulation.

Finally, it holds the crucial role of training the “tech-literate” next generation to ensure that new ophthalmology graduates will be competent drivers and critical evaluators of new technology, not naive users.^{4,5} It has, and will always be, a breeding ground for exemplary future ophthalmologists, equipped with outstanding surgical skill and clinical acumen, and above all, a sense of service for others.

Capitalizing on six and a half decades of “honor and excellence in eye care, education and vision research,” and combining these with cutting-edge technology, UP-PGH DOVS is in a strategic position to help mitigate, if not eliminate, preventable blindness - so that every Filipino, no matter where they live, can look forward to a brighter, clearer future.⁶

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Author Disclosure

In preparing this editorial, the authors used an algorithmic language tool (Gemini) to generate an initial draft based on the authors' notes, content ideas, intended messages, and themes. Gemini was also used to refine the style, vocabulary, organization, and clarity of writing for this article. The authors reviewed and revised the AI-generated content and take full responsibility for the final published version.

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