

# Current Perspective

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## Two Laureates

The Laureate Award is the Academy's highest honor. It is awarded for exceptional contributions to the prevention of blindness or the restoration of sight through scientific discovery, clinical accomplishments, establishment of new standards of care, or sustained and impactful professional leadership. It has been given only 21 times in the Academy's history. (There are 12 living past awardees.) Their achievements span the disciplines of genetics, public health, pediatrics, retina/vitreous, professional leadership, oncology, glaucoma, cornea, pathology, and cataract surgery.

This year in New Orleans the Academy will bestow the Award and its medal upon two of our colleagues—one for 2020 and one for 2021. They are both remarkable individuals with very different backgrounds and areas of professional focus—but with similarly transformative impact. And each is far from unidimensional.

George B. Bartley, MD, is the 2020 Laureate awardee. An oculoplastic and orbital surgeon, he has trained countless residents and fellows and contributed over 300 peer-reviewed papers and other publications to our scientific literature. He has served as Editor-in-Chief of the Academy's flagship journal *Ophthalmology*. But his greatest achievements have as much to do with his leadership skills as his surgical, writing, and editorial skills. For seven years, George was the CEO of Mayo Clinic in Florida charged with developing a whole new medical center in Jacksonville. And most recently, he has been CEO of the American Board of Ophthalmology, leading that organization through the complex decision matrix surrounding continuous certification and the movement away from a single high-stakes examination. He has demanded that new standards be based on evidence, not social theory, and that they reflect the realities of clinical practice.

Michael T. Trese, MD, is the 2021 Laureate awardee. Mike has been described as “the father of modern pediatric retinal surgery.” His clinical observations, research, and writings over the past three decades have led to a profound change in the management of pediatric retinal detachments. Thousands of children around the world with retinal detachments from retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) enjoy vision

thanks to Mike's discoveries and his training of hundreds of colleagues. More recently, he has gone back to the laboratory, leading a team of scientists that has been exploring basic molecular causes of ocular ischemia and neovascularization, and has cloned a potential novel therapeutic agent soon to begin clinical trials. He is also a leader in the international effort to bring telemedical screening of premature infants for ROP to underdeveloped areas around the world.

Taken together, these two amazing individuals span the spectrum of our profession—from cloning signaling molecules to facial reconstructive surgery; from a private practitioner to a Mayo Clinic CEO; from surgery on desperately ill 1,500-g neonates to standard-setting for a profession.

These two ophthalmologists embody the richness of our professional culture. We celebrate them with the Laureate Award for an incomparable professional legacy. And they are so much more than Laureates. They are spouses, parents, grandparents, fierce friends, fishermen, musicians, athletes, sailors, and more. George Bartley's band in the 70's played around the world—even crossing paths with Freddie Mercury and Queen! Mike Trese was an offensive tackle for the University of Michigan and optometrist before medical school!

Drs. Bartley and Trese share a deep and abiding respect for science and for the scientific method, for the trust and responsibility inherent in the patient-physician relationship, and for the honor (and the pleasure) of preserving vision and empowering lives. I know I speak for us all in saying that we are blessed they chose ophthalmology and became our colleagues.

**For more about the Laureates**, visit [aao.org/about/awards/laureate](http://aao.org/about/awards/laureate).



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