

# ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

THOUGHTS AND UPDATES FROM DR. W. P. ANDREW LEE

August 20, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to announce the appointment of **J. William Harbour, M.D.**, as the new Chair of the Department of Ophthalmology, effective Nov. 1. He will hold the David Bruton, Jr. Chair in Ophthalmology.

Dr. Harbour joins us from the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, where he served as Director of Ocular Oncology, Vice Chair for Translational Research at the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Associate Director for Basic Science at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, and member of the Interdisciplinary Stem Cell Institute. He also served as Professor of Ophthalmology, Biochemistry, and Molecular Biology, and held the Dr. Mark J. Daily, M.D., Endowed Chair.



Following his undergraduate education at Texas A&M University in College Station, he earned his medical degree from The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore. Dr. Harbour completed his residency at the Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia, followed by a fellowship in retinal surgery at the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in Miami, and a fellowship in ocular oncology at the University of California, San Francisco. He then pursued a postdoctoral fellowship in cancer research at Washington University in St. Louis.

Dr. Harbour is currently the principal investigator of multiple grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) designed to improve testing and treatment of eye cancers.

A major theme of his research is to elucidate the key genetic and epigenetic events associated with tumor progression and metastasis in uveal melanoma (UM) and retinoblastoma, the most common eye cancers in adults and children, respectively. His laboratory uses an integrative approach that includes genetic, epigenetic, genomic, transcriptomic and proteomic techniques to develop new precision therapeutic strategies.

Dr. Harbour's lab discovered a gene expression profile that predicts patient outcome in UM that is now the industry standard. His team also discovered three of the most important genomic events that lead to metastasis in UM, including mutations in *BAP1* and *SF3B1*, and aberrant expression of the

preferentially expressed antigen in melanoma (PRAME). More recently, his group discovered LAG3 as the predominant immune checkpoint protein in UM that has led to an investigator-initiated clinical trial.

Dr. Harbour has developed new surgical methods for intraocular biopsy, radioactive plaque surgery, and vitrectomy in eyes with intraocular tumors, and he has trained over 100 students, residents, and clinical and research fellows. He founded the Collaborative Ocular Oncology Group, composed of most major ocular oncology centers in the United States that manage patients with UM and other ocular tumors.

His contributions to the field have been recognized with the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology's Cogan Award, and The Macula Society's Paul Henkind and Rosenthal Awards, among others.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Dwain Thiele, for his leadership as Interim Chair of Ophthalmology; to Dr. Brad Marple, for his service as Chair of the Search Committee; and to all the Search Committee members – Dr. Justin Bishop, Dr. Dev Desai, Dr. Lu Le, Dr. Christopher Madden, Dr. Shawna Nesbitt, Dr. Margaret Phillips, Dr. Dorothy Sendelbach, Dr. Philip Shaul, and Dr. Olaf Stuve – for the dedication and insights they brought to this comprehensive national search.

The strong interdisciplinary research experience and established collaborative initiatives Dr. Harbour brings will further elevate UT Southwestern Medical Center as a national hub for excellence in ophthalmology discovery and clinical care.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Harbour to Dallas and UT Southwestern.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

W. P. Andrew Lee, M.D.

Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost  
Dean, UT Southwestern Medical School

Copyright 2021 UT Southwestern Medical Center. All rights reserved.

*Academic Connections* is a publication of Communications, Marketing, and Public Affairs (CMPA) at UT Southwestern Medical Center.