

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



BEAUTY OF  
SIGHT

A LIONS EYE BANK

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## ON THE COVER



Fatemeh Sugrue was born with a rare eye disease. Throughout her life she has faced challenges to keep her in a life of sight. Now a mother, she offers hope and support to others navigating life with Peters anomaly.

# 2023 – 2024 STATUS REPORT

TOTAL NUMBER OF EYE DONORS: **975**

EYES/CORNEAS RECOVERED

FOR SURGICAL USE: **1,678**  
RESEARCH USE: **269**

TOTAL TISSUE PROVIDED FOR TRANSPLANT

CORNEAS PROVIDED FOR TRANSPLANT: **1,010**

TRANSPLANTED IN THE US: **697**

TRANSPLANTED INTERNATIONALLY: **313**

SCLERA PROVIDED FOR SURGERY: **135**

OCULAR TISSUES FOR RESEARCH & EDUCATION: **660**

PATHOLOGY CASES PROCESSED: **4,006**

SERUM TEARS/PRGF PROCESSED: **1,812**



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is my honor to present the 2023-2024 President's Report, reflecting the tremendous progress we've made as an organization over the past year. This year, under the leadership of the Board of Directors, we have continued to strengthen our mission, expand our global outreach, and deliver critical services to those in need. Through strategic initiatives, dedicated partnerships, and a focus on sustainable growth, Beauty of Sight has made a meaningful impact on the lives of individuals and communities around the world.



A significant milestone for us this year has been the continued progress of our Capital Campaign aimed at funding the construction of our new state-of-the-art facility. This new space will allow us to enhance our programs, provide expanded services, and continue to grow our global reach.

One of the most exciting developments in our campaign was the introduction of the Model Club Campaign, a challenge issued to the Lions of Multiple District 35 to raise \$500,000 in support of the new facility. The response has been overwhelming, and we are incredibly grateful for the support of the Lions Clubs, whose dedication to our mission has made this ambitious goal within reach.

The success of this campaign reflects the strong collaboration between our organization and the Lions community. We are well on our way to achieving the funding needed to bring our new facility to life, and we couldn't be more excited about the opportunities this space will create.

Our international outreach efforts continued to grow this year, particularly in the U.S. and South America. In partnership with global medical organizations, we focused on providing cutting-edge training and education to doctors, empowering them to restore sight and improve patient outcomes. We trained over 120 doctors in both our laboratory with one-on-one hands-on training, as well as at prominent conferences such as the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) and various international meetings. These training programs play a pivotal role in advancing surgical techniques, ensuring that doctors across the globe are equipped with the skills they need to perform life-changing surgeries

and help end blindness. Our work in South America, specifically, has helped to strengthen our international presence and forge lasting relationships with medical professionals committed to improving eye care worldwide.

Our commitment to supporting those in need remained a cornerstone of our work this year. The Serum Tears Financial Assistance Program continued to expand, providing 122 patients with free autologous serum eye drops. This therapy is essential for patients suffering from severe dry

eye and other ocular conditions, and our ability to provide this service at no cost is a critical part of our mission to ensure that no one is denied the care they need because of financial barriers.

We are proud of the growth of this program and the life-changing impact it has on patients who rely on these treatments to restore their vision and improve their quality of life. This year's success in providing free serum tears further underscores our commitment to serving individuals in need and enhancing access to vital eye care.

As we reflect on the achievements of this fiscal year, it's clear that Beauty of Sight is on a path of significant growth and impact. From our ongoing capital campaign and the success of our Model Club Campaign to our expanding international presence and the continued growth of our financial assistance programs, we are positioned to make an even greater difference in the years ahead.

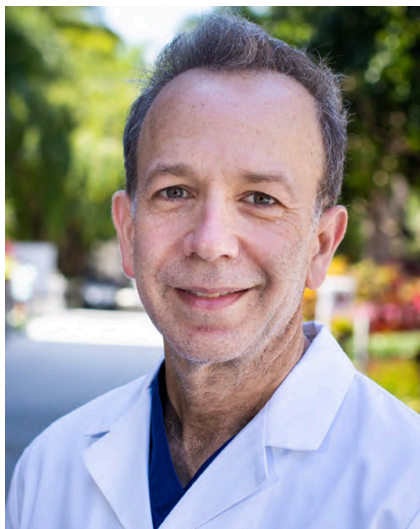
None of these accomplishments would be possible without the continued dedication of our staff, volunteers, donors, and partners. Your support, commitment, and generosity are the driving forces behind everything we do.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed to the success of Beauty of Sight. Together, we are advancing our mission of restoring sight and creating a world without blindness. We look forward to the continued support and collaboration of our valued members and stakeholders as we continue this important journey.

**Tony Montes, PDG**  
**President, Beauty of Sight**

# MEDICAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT

As we reflect on 2024, the Beauty of Sight has seen continued growth and impact in our mission to restore and enhance vision worldwide. Building on the foundation of excellence in eye banking, our expanded services have impacted lives not only locally but across the globe. While tissue donation and transplantation remain at the heart of our work, this year has seen significant strides in our commitment to research, patient care, and education—areas that set us apart from other similar organizations and define our vision for the future.



In 2024, we successfully recovered eyes from 975 generous donors, enabling us to provide 1,010 corneas for transplantation. This achievement represents our dedication to restoring sight and improving lives, with tissues distributed both within the state of Florida as well as nationally and across international borders. Our efforts included 660 tissues allocated for research and education, all provided free of charge, continuing our long-standing commitment to advancing ocular science.

The increase in the variety of tissue types processed—including DSAEK, DMEK, DALK, and CAIRS—has been crucial in offering surgeons individual patient specific surgical options, resulting in more rapid recovery and improved outcome for transplant recipients. In addition, our tissue program continues to support surgeons providing scleral and corneal patch grafts for patients undergoing enucleation and glaucoma filtration surgery, underscoring our ability to provide comprehensive sight-saving services to fulfill diverse patient needs.

Our autologous serum tears program has made significant strides this year, serving 1,812 patients suffering from severe dry eye disease. In response to the growing need for accessible care, we provided 6% of these treatments at no cost to patients facing financial hardship. This essential service allows individuals with chronic ocular

surface dysfunction to return to their normal daily activities thus improving their quality of life. Similarly, our PRGF program has supported those with more advanced, often incapacitating, dry eye symptoms, offering an innovative solution to promote healing and tissue regeneration through chemical modification of the patient's own growth factors.

Our specialty specific ophthalmic pathology laboratory has played a critical role in the diagnosis and treatment of often rare and esoteric ocular diseases. This year,

we processed over 3,800 ocular specimens, including whole eyes, biopsies and cytology specimens as one of a handful of specialized ophthalmic pathology laboratories operating both domestically and internationally. Our laboratory serves as a key educational resource, training medical students, residents, fellows, and faculty both in Florida and overseas. Through these efforts, we are not only advancing clinical care but also educating the next generation of sight saving ophthalmic specialists.

Looking to the future, we are excited to continue our efforts to expand our organization, both operationally and physically. To that end, we continue to raise funds through our capital campaign with the plan to build new laboratory space to meet the needs of our growing services. A new facility will provide the room and resources needed to continue our vital work, ensuring that we remain at the forefront of eye banking, research, and education.

The success of Beauty of Sight is made possible by the continued support of our donors, partners, and community. We are deeply grateful to all who contribute to our mission. As we work toward securing a larger, more state of the art home for our organization, we invite you to join us in this endeavor. Together, we will continue to provide the gift of sight to those in need of our wide array of services.

**Sander R. Dubovy, MD**  
**Medical Director, Beauty of Sight**

## FEATURE STORY

# Fighting Darkness and Finding an Eye-Opening Life

Fatemeh Sugrue was born with Peters anomaly, a rare congenital eye disease. Throughout her life, she has faced numerous challenges and undergone several procedures in the hopes of restoring and maintaining her sight. Now 35 years old, she is married and a mother to two young boys. Her life's mission is to advocate for others who suffer from this rare condition and to connect with those who share similar struggles.

The name Fatemeh, a common name in the Middle East, is often associated with women who are strong, formal, refined, serious, mature, natural, and wholesome. Fatemeh Sugrue, a 35-year-old wife and mother of two, embodies all of these qualities and many more, as she continues her lifelong journey of living with and managing the challenges of Peters anomaly.

Fatemeh came into the world without sight, without light. Her parents quickly realized that their newborn daughter could not see. However, they were also faced with the harsh reality that there were no ophthalmologists in the city where they lived. Still determined to find answers, they learned of a British ophthalmologist who visited a nearby town once a month to hold an eye clinic. When Fatemeh was six months old, her parents stood in a long line, holding their daughter in their arms, hoping for help.

After a brief eye exam, the visiting ophthalmologist gave them the diagnosis: Peters anomaly.

Peters anomaly is a rare congenital condition characterized by cloudy corneas and abnormal development in the front part of the eye. The disorder affects fewer than 100 children each year in the U.S.

Treatment is often complicated, requiring surgical intervention, and even then, the outcomes vary from person to person.

The ophthalmologist's instructions were clear. If they wanted their daughter to have any chance of seeing, they would need to take her somewhere she could receive the advanced medical care she so desperately needed.

Fatemeh was not born into wealth. But what she did have was a strong, close-knit, and supportive family. As a young girl, she experienced the power of that support in profound ways. One of her aunts had moved from the Middle East to the United States and was living in the Dallas, Texas area. When Fatemeh's parents reached out to her for help, she responded without hesitation, expressing unwavering commitment and saying she would do anything for her niece.

At about nine months old, Fatemeh underwent her first corneal transplant on both eyes. Shortly after, she also had glaucoma surgery. Both procedures were successful. Within a matter of days, baby Fatemeh could see the world around her for the very first time.

Her family was overwhelmed with joy and gratitude. Her mother, however, also felt the ache of absence. While her daughter was experiencing her first sights, she was thousands of miles away.

"My mother knew that sending me to the U.S. to live with my aunt was best for me during that time, even if it meant missing out on a lot of milestones—when I first ate solid food, when I first sat up, when I first walked," Fatemeh shared. "Thirty-five years ago, you couldn't just pick up a phone and FaceTime, so once or twice a month, my aunt would dress me up and take me to a studio for professional photos, which she would then send to my mother so she wouldn't miss any stage of my growth."





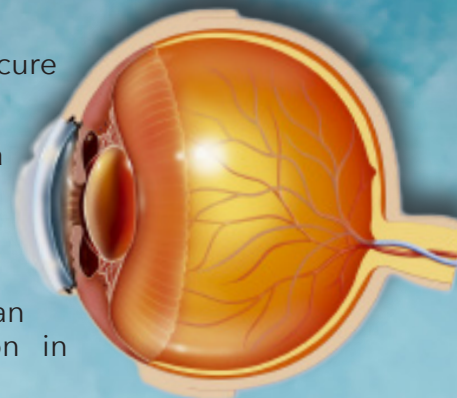


As a growing toddler, Fatemeh made a full recovery from her transplants. At two years old, it was decided that her aunt would return her home for a visit. However, for years, her family had been working toward the goal of immigrating to the United States permanently. They had sold their possessions and were determined to reunite with their daughter and give her the future she deserved.

Just before Fatemeh's third birthday, her family finally made the move to Palm Beach County, Florida. The warm climate reminded them of their home country, but the decision was also strategic as Palm Beach was just one hour away from the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, one of the top eye care centers in the world. Fatemeh's first ophthalmologist there was Dr. William Culbertson, a renowned professor specializing in corneal and external diseases.

## Information on Peters Anomaly

- Peters anomaly is a very rare condition that affects the eyes. It develops before birth due to a genetic mutation. People born with this condition experience vision problems due to cloudy patches on the cornea, iris and lens of the eye.
- There are treatments to mitigate symptoms, but there is no cure for this condition.
- The effects of Peters anomaly causes thinning of the cornea and a clouding of the cornea's surface. It also affects the connection between the cornea and the iris, the colored part of the eye.
- The condition is named after Dr. Alfred Peters. A German ophthalmologist who was first to describe the condition in modern medical literature.





## FEATURE STORY

# An Eye-Opening Life

- From page 7

Fatemeh grew up in Florida, where she excelled in school. She was an outstanding student, though sports weren't her strength. "It was hard for me to see the ball," she said with a smile. "But I do love dancing."

She also enjoyed drawing and photography. Her mother has saved boxes full of sketchbooks, filled with her pencil drawings. As a teenager, Fatemeh was drawn to health and science. At 18, she began working as a pharmacy technician.

Since she didn't drive at night, she often caught rides home with a coworker. One evening, that coworker asked if she'd like to stop by Denny's for something to eat. She said yes. Seven years after that spontaneous dinner, she and Andrew were married.

A few years later, they became a family of four, welcoming their sons, Daniel and Ryan, now six and four.

In 2013, Fatemeh completed nursing school, earned her RN degree, and was excited to begin her career. But just a few months after receiving her license, she woke up one morning with sudden and severe vision loss.

Doctors found that she was experiencing corneal edema, a condition that clouded her vision and required treatment. Fortunately, the condition improved, and she was eventually able to return to work, this time at a pharmacy. A couple of years later, Fatemeh took on a new role as a tele-nurse for AstraZeneca.



*“When I wake up in the morning,  
I don’t look at the clock, I look out the  
window. Because I could lose my sight  
at any time.”*



## FINDING THE SWEETSPOT

### Fatemeh is Helped From Beauty of Sight's Serum Tears

Fatemeh experiences dry eye, especially when she's in cooler environments like the hospital. To help manage this, she uses Beauty of Sight's autologous serum tears – an ophthalmic biological therapy custom-made for each patient. These drops are created by combining the patient's own blood serum with sterile, preservative-free saline or a balanced salt solution. For Fatemeh, using the drops requires special care: if too much liquid collects behind her corneas, it can increase pressure in her eyes. That's why she has to find the perfect "sweet spot" when applying the serum tears.

But working full-time in front of a computer screen began to take a toll on her already-fragile eyesight.

"After a while, I saw the negative impact on my eyes from looking at a screen all day," she said. "I went part-time to protect my vision, but my husband encouraged me to stop working altogether and focus on my health."

With fewer than 100 new cases of Peters anomaly diagnosed in the U.S. each year, there's very little public awareness or research funding for the condition. Fatemeh realized there was a need for connection, for community, and for hope. So, she started a blog.

"Very few people have this disease. I created the blog mostly for information—for people with Peters Anomaly or their families," she said. "People from more than a dozen countries have reached out. Some are from the Philippines, Africa, Australia. It's a way to give hope."

One story stands out in her mind, a mother with a baby recently diagnosed with Peters Anomaly contacted Fatemeh through the blog. "She read about my life and saw hope for her child's future," Fatemeh said. "That's why I keep doing it."

In recent years, Fatemeh has undergone additional surgeries including more corneal transplants, with donor tissue generously provided by Beauty of

Sight. These surgeries have helped her maintain her vision and stay present in her children's lives. In addition to surgery, Fatemeh uses Serum Tears, specialized eye drops made from her own blood, which provide essential nutrients to her corneas and help reduce inflammation and dryness.

But the risk of vision loss is always looming.

"Peters anomaly is like a domino crash," she said. "We have to keep working in and out with the corneas. When I wake up in the morning, I don't look at the clock, I look out the window. Because I could lose my sight at any time."

Fatemeh no longer drives. When she takes her boys outside to play, she always brings another adult along just in case. Though her condition presents daily challenges, she remains grounded and hopeful.

"There's not a lot of research because this condition is so rare. That means fewer new ideas and innovations," she said. "It would be amazing if something came from my story if it could lead to a key, or spark research. But for now, I take care of my sight as much as I can."

One of her doctors once told her that she might not be able to see her sons graduate high school.

"I like when I'm told the truth," she said. "And I'm going to keep my sight for them, the best I can."



## RESEARCH

### Beauty of Sight Leads Study on Textural Interface Opacities (TIO) in DSAEK Transplants

Marina S. Chatzea, MD; G.D. Kymionis, MD; Dionysios G. Vakalopoulos, MD; Robert C. O'Brien, PhD; Daniela Mora; Katrina Llanes, CEBT; E. Fout, MHSA; W. Buras, CEBT; C. Triglia, PhD, CEBT; R.S. Tonk, MD; S. Yoo, MD

#### Understanding Textural Interface Opacities (TIO): A Breakthrough in Corneal Transplant Research

Corneal transplants have transformed the lives of countless individuals suffering from vision loss due to corneal diseases. Among the most common and effective modern techniques is Descemet's Stripping Automated Endothelial Keratoplasty (DSAEK). This minimally invasive procedure replaces the damaged inner layer of the cornea with healthy donor tissue, offering quicker recovery and fewer complications compared to traditional full thickness corneal transplantation. However, a newly recognized challenge—Textural Interface Opacities (TIO)—can sometimes cloud these positive outcomes.

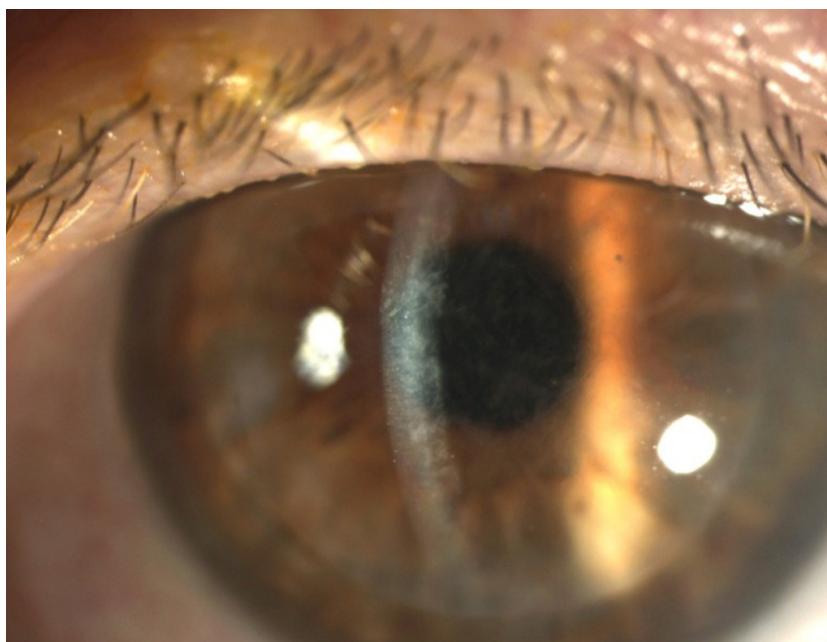
#### What is TIO?

Textural Interface Opacities (TIO) are cloudy patches that may develop on the surface where the donor graft meets the recipient's cornea. These opacities can blur vision and, in some cases, require further surgery to restore clarity. Until recently, the prevalence and impact of TIO were not fully understood, leaving patients and surgeons without clear guidelines for predicting or preventing this complication.

#### Groundbreaking Research in collaboration with Bascom Palmer Eye Institute

A recent study conducted at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute and supported by Beauty of Sight has shed new light on TIO. This study was led by Beauty of Sight international fellow, Marina Chatzea, of Athens, Greece, who worked on this research during her three-month stay at Beauty of Sight.

Dr. Chatzea and her research team developed a novel grading system, called the **M-TIO scale**, to evaluate the severity of these opacities using Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT)



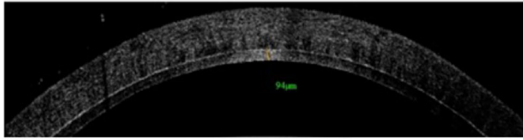
*Figure 1 shows a slit lamp of a patient with TIO - note the very hazy beam of light.*



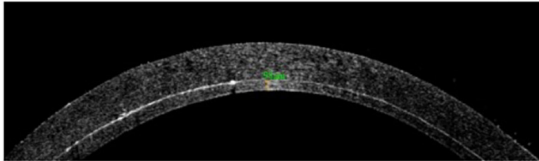
## RESEARCH

### M-TIO Grading Scale

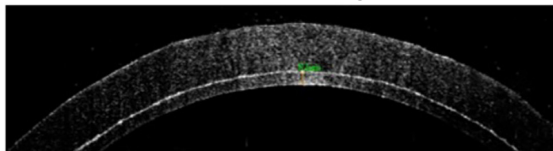
STAGE 0: Not visible No visible TIO on OCT



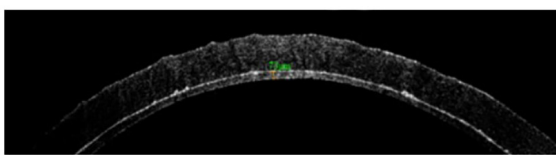
STAGE 1. Mild TIO affecting only the periphery



STAGE 2. Mild TIO affecting central zone



STAGE 3. Severe TIO affecting central zone



*Figure 2 shows the grading scale.*

imaging before surgery. OCT is a non-invasive imaging technique that provides detailed cross-sectional images of the cornea, allowing specialists to detect even subtle irregularities. The **M-TIO scale** classifies opacities into four stages, ranging from no visible irregularities to severe opacities affecting the central optical zone—an area critical for clear vision.

The team then examined 422 OCT images of corneal grafts prepared between 2019 and 2023 at Beauty of Sight, to identify the presence and severity of TIO in the graft prior to transplantation. Each graft was graded on a scale from 0 (no TIO) to 3 (severe TIO). The team then analyzed all patients' visual outcomes following surgery.

### Key Findings:

Among the grafts analyzed, 70% exhibited mild or no TIO. The patients receiving these graft experienced significantly better vision outcomes after surgery. In contrast, 30% of grafts presented with moderate to severe TIO, which was directly linked to poorer vision results. Patients with severe TIO were more likely to experience complications, often requiring additional corrective procedures to improve visual outcomes.

### Why This Matters

This study is the first to propose a standardized grading system for TIO, enabling surgeons and eye banks to better predict vision outcomes before surgery. By identifying TIO in donor tissue prior to transplantation, eye banks can prioritize higher-quality grafts—ultimately improving patient outcomes and reducing the need for further interventions. Eye banks around the U.S. currently use OCT to evaluate the thickness of DSAEK tissue after preparing the tissue for surgery. This grading system can easily be integrated into their daily practice to improve patient outcomes.

### Looking Ahead

Further research is now underway to explore the underlying causes of TIO, including potential links to donor tissue irregularities and surgical materials. This critical work will guide improvements in graft preparation and storage techniques, bringing us closer to a future where every corneal transplant delivers the best possible vision.

**Beauty of Sight is proud to support innovative research like this, which not only advances scientific knowledge but also transforms lives through clearer vision.**

# OUR GRATITUDE TO ALL HAVE

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Estate of Woody Harris

# Bringing Smiles and Comfort: The Beauty of Sight for Children Program

At the Beauty of Sight Foundation, we believe that vision is one of the greatest gifts in life. But we also understand that, for many children, medical procedures related to their eyes can be intimidating and scary. That's why we've created a heartwarming initiative: Beauty of Sight For Children. This special program is designed to bring comfort, joy, and reassurance to young patients in our community by providing them with a stuffed animal to hold onto during their ophthalmic surgery.

Every year, Beauty of Sight Foundation gifts over 1,000 stuffed animals to children who are about to undergo surgery. These cuddly companions are more than just toys. They offer emotional support, ease anxiety, and create a sense of safety in a setting that can often be overwhelming for children. It's amazing how something as simple as a plush toy can make a hospital visit a little less scary and a little more bearable.

As a non-profit, we rely on the support of generous donors to keep this program going. Every donation helps provide a stuffed animal for a child in need. If you'd like to be part of this wonderful mission, you can make a difference by donating on our website at [www.beautyofsight.org](http://www.beautyofsight.org). A gift of just \$100 can help bring 10 stuffed animals to children, brightening their hospital visit and easing their anxiety.

Together, we can bring smiles to the faces of children who need it most. Join us in making a lasting impact and helping children see the beauty in life – even in the midst of a challenging time. Thank you for supporting the Beauty of Sight for Children program and for helping us spread joy and comfort where it's needed most.





# FINANCIAL REPORT

	FY 2024	FY 2023
REVENUES & GAINS		
Program Service Fees	\$ 3,674,889	\$ 3,822,108
Contributions		
General Public	\$ 17,041	\$ 32,339
Lions Clubs	\$ 2,645	\$ 9,333
Donated Facilities and Services	\$ 126,285	\$ 136,235
Interest & Dividends	\$ 343,299	\$ 503,148
Net unrealized and realized gain (loss) of long-term investments	\$ 2,264,513	\$ 1,268,136
Total Revenues and Gains	\$6,428,672	\$5,771,299
EXPENSES		
Program Services		
Medical Services	\$ 3,669,993	\$ 3,808,322
Research Grants	\$ 132,025	\$ 160,242
Supporting Services		
Management and General Development	\$ 399,171	\$ 259,846
Development	\$ 176,954	\$ 299,645
Total Expenses	\$4,378,144	\$4,528,055
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$2,050,528	\$1,243,244

REVENUE SOURCES 2023-2024

Source	Percentage
Program Service Fees	88%
Interest & Dividends	8%
Donated Facilities & Services	3%
Contributions	1%

EXPENSES 2023-2024

Category	Percentage
Program Service	87%
Supporting Services	13%



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