THE FIRST ARTIFICIAL RETINAL BIONIC IMPLANT TO RESTORE VISION FOR THE BLIND IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION WILL BE PERFORMED IN HAWAII LED BY DR. GREGG KOKAME AT THE EYE SURGERY CENTER OF HAWAII (ESCH)

The bionic eye is the only retinal prosthesis approved by the U.S. FDA and the first in the world.

(Honolulu, Hawaii, March 16, 2015) At the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii (ESCH), Dr. Gregg Kokame of the Retina Consultants of Hawaii will perform the first implant of the Argus II artificial retina in the Asia Pacific region on March 24, 2015.

The Argus II (known as the bionic eye) is the most clinically advanced artificial retina ever developed. The Argus II is U.S. FDA approved and has shown dramatic clinical results to help patients with retinal blindness to be able to see again. Implantation of this novel vision restoring device on March 24 at the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii (ESCH) will be the first in the Asia Pacific region, and only the second site west of the Rockies in the United States to perform this procedure.

The Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii is the leading ophthalmology specialty surgery center focused exclusively on the surgical treatment of eye disease in the Asia Pacific region. Eighteen eye surgeons perform ophthalmologic surgeries at the Center. The Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii is a portfolio company of SKAI Ventures, a Hawaii based venture accelerator focused on transforming ingenious ideas into disruptive innovations and high growth companies with global impact. A program for artificial retinal bionic implants, and for corneal transplantation, is established at the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii to help serve patients from throughout the Asia Pacific.

This groundbreaking procedure will be held at the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii at the Dole Cannery at Iwilei. A press conference will be held after the surgery at 3 PM on March 24, at the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii. Dr. Gregg Kokame who is leading the surgical team, Dr. Mark Humayun, the inventor of the Argus II from USC, and Dr. Hank Wuh, the founder and CEO of SKAI Ventures will be at the press conference.

The Argus II Retinal Prosthesis System (Argus II) is the only approved artificial retinal implant in the world to allow blind patients with a form of retinal blindness known as retinitis pigmentosa to see using artificial vision. Argus II is a chip implanted on the patient’s retina that receives (more)
visual signals from a camera mounted on the patient’s glasses. The signals from the camera stimulate the inner retina through the Argus II, which then sends the signals through the optic nerve to the brain to generate a visual image for the patient.

“This is a revolutionary development in the field of retinal surgery where for the first time a patient who is completely blind will have the ability to see again using a retinal implant,” said Dr. Gregg Kokame, the founder and president of Retina Consultants of Hawaii and the president of the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii. “I am extremely honored to be the first surgeon to perform this procedure in the Asia Pacific region and hope we will have the opportunity to restore vision for many patients each year.”

“We are extremely honored for Dr. Kokame and the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii to be the first to perform this ground breaking vision restoring surgery in the Asia Pacific,” said Dr. Hank Wuh, CEO of SKAI Ventures. “By making this surgery available, it will help numerous patients throughout the Asia Pacific region with retinal blindness. Hawaii, already known for its gracious hospitality and world class tourism, now has a center of excellence for vision with a team of preeminent surgeons at the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii and a breakthrough technology to treat blindness. This makes the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii the center of choice for patients from Asia.”

About Retina Consultants

Retina Consultants of Hawaii (RCH) was founded by Dr. Gregg Kokame. Partners include Dr. Gregg Kokame, Dr. James Lai, and Dr. Raymond Wee. All three ophthalmologists specialize in medical, surgical, and laser treatment of retinal, vitreous, and macular diseases. RCH is globally recognized for patient care, research, and education, and has helped to pioneer many of the leading treatment and technology in use today. Dr. Gregg Kokame is an Iolani graduate, and earned his bachelor’s at Pomona College. He received his MD from UCLA, and completed his ophthalmology residency at the Jules Stein Eye Institute and vitreoretinal surgery fellowship at the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute of the University of Miami, which is ranked the #1 Eye Institute in America for more than a decade. Dr. Kokame is a clinical professor at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine, where he teaches international vitreoretinal fellows, residents, interns and medical students about retinal diseases. All partner physicians at RCH are listed as Best Doctors in Hawaii.

About The Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii (ESCH)

The Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii is the leading state-of-the-art ophthalmology specialty
surgery center of excellence focused exclusively on the surgical treatment of eye disease in Hawaii and the Asia Pacific region. Eighteen eye surgeons perform highly specialized ophthalmic surgeries at the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii. Surgeries performed include treatments for glaucoma, cataract, myopia, retina, cornea, and other eye conditions. All staff and surgical team members are specialists in eye surgery and its subspecialties, allowing the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii to provide world class expert attention for patient care. The center is able to perform nearly 10,000 surgeries a year.

About SKAI Ventures

SKAI Ventures is a venture accelerator focused on transforming novel, ingenious ideas from physicians, scientists and inventors from around the world, into disruptive innovations and high growth companies with global impact. SKAI Ventures invests in people, technologies, and companies that can positively impact the world and the community we live in. SKAI Ventures actively mentors and nurtures young entrepreneurs and innovators around the globe, especially in Hawaii where the Company was founded. Portfolio companies of SKAI Ventures include the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii, TruTag Technologies, FitGoFun, Eyegenix, and the Endoscopy Institute of Hawaii.

SKAI’s motto is Invent. Disrupt. Inspire.

www.skaiventures.com

About Argus II and Second Sight

The Argus II Retinal Prosthesis System (“Argus II”) is the world’s first approved device intended to restore some functional vision for people suffering from blindness. Argus II is approved for use in the United States (FDA) and European Economic Area (CE Mark) and is available in some European countries, with several more to be added. Second Sight develops, manufactures and markets implantable visual prosthetics to restore functional vision to blind patients. The company’s current product is an advanced neuro stimulation device called the Argus® II System, which treats retinitis pigmentosa. The Argus II System is the only retinal prosthesis approved in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration and the first approved retinal prosthesis in the world.

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Patients interested in learning more about bionic retina transplantations at the Eye Surgery Center of Hawaii (ESCH) for the restoration of vision should contact: Dr. Gregg Kokame’s office at 808-487-8928.

Patients from overseas interested in bionic retina transplantation or cornea transplantation for the restoration of vision should contact: SKAI Ventures Concierge Program. gulloa@skaiventures.com. 808 949 2208 Ext 129.

Gregg T. Kokame, MD, MMM
Argus II Surgeon- Asia Pacific Region

Image courtesy of Second Sight

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