

Title: EECS Alumnus Snow Tseng (Ph.D. 05') Chaired the 2024 Gordon Research Conference: Optics and Photonics in Medicine & Biology

This year we had the first Asian-based researcher to Chair the world-renowned conference.

Since its inception in 1965, the Gordon Research Conference: Lasers in Medicine and Biology (recently renamed as Optics and Photonics in Medicine and Biology) has been a beacon for early-stage biomedical optics technologies. As one of the longest standing GRC's, it has consistently fostered innovation and collaboration among researchers and students, drawing them to its intimate setting for profound scientific exchanges and the cultivation of lasting professional relationships.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference in 2020 was postponed, and resumed in 2022. The 2024 Gordon Research Conference: Optics and Photonics in Medicine and Biology (OPMB) was successfully held at Bates College, Lewiston, Maine, USA. This year the conference theme was 'From Fundamental Physics to Applied Physiology'. This conference was co-chaired by E. Duco Jansen (Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, USA) and Snow Tseng (National Taiwan University, Taiwan). Snow recently had much medical problems (due to his multiple brain surgeries 26 years ago); he could barely walk; he could barely see. Luckily, co-Chair Duco has taken care of many of the conference planning logistics and did an excellent fundraising job; also thanks to Prof. Maurice Aalders (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands) who was huge help to the chairs in planning the conference. With the participation of researchers from all over the world, senior scientists and early career scientists (including graduate students and postdocs which made up nearly 2/3 of the conference attendees, we had a very fruitful conference from July 6-12, 2024, with July 6th reserved for the Gordon Research Seminar, a day-long session organized by graduate students and postdocs specifically for graduate students and postdocs.

A really cool thing of this Gordon conference is the informal awards ceremony which usually takes place the last day of the conference. There are roughly 200 Gordon conferences in various fields each year, it seems that only this Gordon (Optics and Photonics in Medicine and Biology) has this humorous award event, affectionally known as "the Gordos." During our GRC in 2008 in the middle of the evening presentation, a woman in the middle of the audience shrieked and jumped out of her seat. There was a bat that had crawled into this women's bag and she opened it during my presentation. Everyone started moving away; except for one person—Paulino. He sprung forward, took off his jacket, and wrapped up the bat in his jacket, then ran it out of the room. His superhero deed was recognized with the "Batman Award" at the Gordos.

Certainly there are lots of interesting things to anticipate at this conference: seeking inspiration, bouncing off research ideas, making connections, etc. But, 'the Gordos' usually is the highlight of this conference.

This year's conference is especially significant as it marks the first time, since the founding of this conference in 1965, that an Asian-based researcher (Dr. Snow Tseng) was the elected co-chair. This historic milestone reflects a broader shift in the global landscape of biomedical optics and highlights the growing influence of Asian research. We are honored to be part of this transformative moment and are committed to participate in the showcasing of cutting-edge advancements while fostering meaningful connections within the international scientific community. As the next conference will also be co-chaired by an Asian scientist (Euiheon Chung of South Korea), we anticipate involving more participants from that corner of the world (southeast Asia) in the near future.

A heartfelt remark was made by Prof. Tayyaba Hasan (a distinguished female senior biomedical researcher at Harvard Medical School and Wellman Laboratories for Photomedicine), who said: "If someone like Snow can come all the way from Taiwan to participate in this conference despite his medical condition and physical inability, then I think I can visit Taiwan someday too, not a problem!"



Figure. Participants of this Gordon conference consists of a wide range of spectrum—medical doctors, optics researchers, and theorists. (left) Invited speaker, Prof. Claus-Peter Richter, MD PhD, Department of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery, Northwestern University; (middle) co-Chair Duco Jansen, Senior Associate Dean, Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Neurological Surgery, Vanderbilt University; (right) co-Chair Snow Tseng, Distinguished Professor, Leadership program, National Taiwan University.