

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Winterthur Ophthalmology Symposium (WOS) - A Tribute to Excellence and Commitment

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From March 14 to 15, 2025, as experts from around the world gathered for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Winterthur Ophthalmology Symposium (WOS), the picturesque city of Winterthur once again became the center of international ophthalmology. Under the guidance of the twin brothers Dr. Ivo Guber and PD Dr. Josef Guber, scientific excellence and personal stories blended at the Casinotheater. In an atmosphere, which combined tradition with elegance, innovations were not only discussed but also experienced, debated, and in some cases, directly applied over the two days.

It could be described as “no good deed goes unpunished”: Following the highly successful pilot congress last year, an enormous responsibility rested on the Guber brothers’ shoulders to meet high expectations with their “WOS 2025”. They did more than just meet them - they exceeded them. With this second WOS, they once again provided a unique opportunity to discuss innovations and advances in ophthalmology, explore the latest industry offerings, and network with colleagues and experts from Switzerland and around the world.

### A congress with heart and vision

Upon entering the Casinotheater, it was immediately apparent: This congress had a soul. WOS is more than a scientific conference; it is a platform that fosters encounters, brings ideas to life, and places passion for ophthalmology at its center. With great attention to detail, the organizers once again created an environment where both young colleagues and experienced experts felt equally welcome. The meticulous planning ensured a seamless execution of the event. The speaker lineup was filled with internationally recognized experts, and the scientific program - with its main symposia, courses, workshops, and wet labs - was world-class, attracting around 300 international participants to Winterthur.

### Scientific highlights and emotional moments

The scientific program was as diverse as it was inspiring. It focused on cutting-edge topics such as gene therapy for retinal diseases, AI-assisted diagnostics, modern refractive surgery, and complex vitreo-retinal procedures. Particularly impressive was the keynote lecture by Dr. Frank Goes (Brasschaat, Belgium), who delivered an enthralling talk on the history of gene therapy in ophthalmology - from its initial visions to today’s promising therapies. Prof. Hendrik Scholl (Basel, Switzerland) swept the audience on a journey into the latest gene therapy developments for macular diseases, vividly illustrating how close reality and vision have become. It was one of those lectures that gave attendees goosebumps and reaffirmed why they work in this field.

### Learning with head, heart, and hands: The wet labs

A standout feature of the congress was the hands-on wet labs, organized with great dedication. Participants had the opportunity to practice techniques such as cataract surgery, ICL implantation, and pars plana vitrectomy under the guidance of experienced surgeons - individually supervised, and at the highest technical level. Young aspiring ophthalmologists and surgeons were able to take their first steps

in cataract surgery in one-on-one training sessions. For more experienced eye surgeons looking to further their education, specialized training in ICL implantation and basic vitreoretinal surgery was offered. The direct feedback and personal guidance facilitated learning beyond the usual scope. It was moving to see young colleagues proudly showcasing their progress.

### **Honoring outstanding individuals: Dr. Johann Krüger and Dr. Johnson Yan Ning Neo**

One of the most touching moments of the congress was the recognition of Dr. Johann Krüger and Dr. Johnson Yan Ning Neo for their exceptional contributions to ophthalmology.



**Figure 1:** Dr. Johann Krüger, who was honored with the newly introduced “Otto Haab Prize” for his life’s work.

Dr. Johann Krüger (Cape Town, South Africa) is considered one of the pioneers of modern ophthalmology. With over 30 years of practice, he specializes in refractive surgery. During this year’s WOS, he was honored with the newly established “Otto Haab Award” for his lifetime achievements. The award is named after Otto Haab, an ophthalmologist born in Winterthur in 1850. The Otto Haab Medal was presented for the first time at the 2<sup>nd</sup> WOS to recognize extraordinary contributions to ophthalmology. Dr. Krüger is valued not only for his vast knowledge and technical brilliance but also for his mentorship and dedication to training young doctors. Being the first recipient of the Otto Haab Award was a profound gesture of respect and gratitude for his lifelong commitment to ophthalmology.



**Figure 2:** Dr. Johnson Yan Ning Neo, winner of the first “Cow Bell Award” for the best lecture of the congress.

The “Best Presentation Award,” which fittingly included a large Swiss cowbell, was presented to Dr. Johnson Yan Ning Neo (London, UK) for his lecture “Persistent Epithelial Defect - Treatment Ladder and Novel Therapeutic Options”. Formerly employed at the world-renowned Moorfields Eye Hospital, Dr. Neo now works at one of the clinics within the Barts Health Group in London. He primarily specializes in cataract and refractive surgery, with additional research interests in corneal inflammation and immunosuppression.

### “Night for sight”: An evening of togetherness

On Friday evening, the Casinotheater was transformed into a grand ballroom for the elegant gala “Night for Sight”. While enjoying the exquisite cuisine, live music, and lively conversations, participants formed new connections, shared experiences, and planned future collaborations. The “Night for Sight” gala was not just a social event with excellent food; it was also a celebration of the collective commitment to ophthalmology.

### Conclusion: WOS 2025 - More than Just a Congress!

WOS 2025 was not just another entry on the continuing education calendar; it was an experience that combined expertise, inspiration, and personal encounters. It was far more than a scientific meeting; it was a place of connection, learning, and mutual appreciation. Winterthur once again showcased itself as an exceptional host city, reinforcing the congress as a well-established centerpiece of a vibrant, modern ophthalmological community. The honors awarded to Dr. Johnson Yan Ning Neo and Dr. Johann Krüger reminded us that behind every medical advancement stand individuals who achieve the extraordinary through passion and dedication. Winterthur provided the perfect setting for this inspiring event, which will resonate in the hearts and minds of participants for a long time to come.



*Figure 3: The organizers, the “Guber Brothers”, once again succeeded in delivering a congress that is unparalleled internationally.*

We already look forward to the next WOS, scheduled for March 12-13, 2026 - once again in charming Winterthur!

More information about the congress: <https://www.wos-congress.com>.

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