

Biography

Jean Bennett, MD, PhD, the F.M. Kirby Professor of Ophthalmology, Professor of Cell and Developmental Biology, and Director of the Center for Advanced Retinal and Ocular Therapeutics (CAROT) at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, is a pioneer in retinal gene therapy. She has developed gene transfer approaches to test treatment strategies for retinal degenerative and ocular neovascular diseases, to elucidate retinal differentiation pathways and to identify pathogenetic mechanisms that lead to blindness. Her research, conducted at UPenn over the past 24 years, has established the scientific underpinnings which made it possible to test the first potential definitive retinal gene therapy treatment for patients with blinding retinal degenerations. Dr. Bennett is the Scientific Director of gene therapy clinical trials for a congenital blindness. These studies, carried out at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, are in Phase 3 (pivotal) studies and could lead to approval of the first ocular gene therapy drug. This could also be the first approved gene therapy drug in the USA and the first approved gene therapy for a blinding disorder worldwide. Dr. Bennett's team initiated their second gene therapy clinical trial for a blinding disease called Choroideremia in January 2015 at UPenn. Her lab continues to work hard to develop treatments that could be applied to other genetic and acquired blinding conditions.