



European Aniridia Conference

**8-th ANIRIDIA CONFERENCE
IN HILTON HOTEL, SOFIA BULGARIA
17-19 April 2026
“HOW TO MAKE IT GR8”**

DAY ONE – 17.04.2026

10.00-12.30 Arrival and registration, industry opens (time for parallel meetings and networking)

12.30-13.30 Lunch break

13.30-14.00 Opening ceremony, welcome by the Ministry of Health and introductory oration – Socioeconomic burden of eye disease ... is there a room for value based medicine? (partnered with Roche)

14.00-14.30 Opening keynote lecture - Novel Therapeutic Approaches and Clinical Guidelines for Aniridia
Dr. Yoshinori Oie

14.30-16.00 Session 1 From bed to bench and back – stem cell research as new hope for aniridia patients

Panelists: Neil Lagali, Jo Zhou

14.30-14.50 Latest update on stem cells, PAX6 and aniridia
Meri Vattulainen, Dina Javidjam

14.50-15.10 Dissecting stem cell differentiation control in corneal development through multi-omics approaches
Jo Zhou

15.10-15.30 Cornea organoids from aniridia-derived iPSC
Dulce Lima Cunha

15.30-16.00 Coffee break and poster session 1

16.00-17.30 Session 2 Young ophthalmologist, scientist and patients presented poster

Implantation of the keratoprosthesis in a child with WAGR syndrome PAX6 aniridia and total corneal opacification

Polyakova E.U., Makhmutov V.U., Kalinnikov U.U., Utegusheva P.G.,

Gene expression analysis of limbal epithelial cells from PAX6- aniridia patients.

Elsa Berg

Crystallins Beyond the Eye: A Potential PAX6-Dependent Mechanism Underlying Visual and Auditory Deficits in Aniridia

Israa Sefawi

Congenital Aniridia: Organizational Models of Care and Quality of Life Outcomes

Oteuliyeva Marfuga Amanzhankyzy

Congenital Aniridia In A One-Year-Old Child: Clinical Findings And Molecular Confirmation

Doroteya Yordanova, Milena Stoyanova

Announcement of the winner of the poster contest for young researchers and presentation of the award in honour of Prof. Barbara Kessmann-Kellner (certificate and a cash prize of 1,000 euros) - *Prof. Christina Grupcheva*

Greetings to the winner of the poster contest, and giving a short speech in memory of Prof. Barbara Käsmann-Kellner - *Rosa Sanches de Vega*

A common photo of all the participants in the EAC and EALCA outside the hotel

17.30-18.30 Session 3 Facilitating the quality of life – the multilevel perspective

Panelists: Dr. Sabrina Vaccaro, Dr. Huban Atila, Daniel Egido

17.30-17.50 Unmet needs of aniridia patients in the everyday clinical practice

Dr. Huban Atila

17.50-18.10 The patient perspective

Daniel Egido, James Buller

18.10-18.30 Panel discussion: How to improve?

Dr. Sabrina Vaccaro, Dr. Huban Atila, Daniel Egido, James Buller, Prof. Christina Grupcheva

18.30 **Closure of DAY ONE**

19.00 Networking in the Earth and people museum

DAY TWO – 18.04.2025

08.00-18.00 Registration and welcome

08.30-10.00 Session 4 The new perspectives in treatment of Glaucoma

Panelists: Dominique Bremond-Gignac, Peter Netland, Alejandra Daruich

8.30-8.50 The role of lasers

Christina Grupcheva

- 8.50-9.10 Anti-glaucoma medication and MIGS Preserflo
Dominique Bremond-Gignac
- 9.10-9.30 MIGS Xen and When nothing helps....
Peter Netland
- 9.30-9.50 Discussion
- 9.50-10.30 Coffee break and poster session 2**
- 10.30-12.00 Session 5 The new perspectives in treatment of Dry eye**
Panelists: Nora Szentmary, Maria Del Carmen Acosta, Christina Grupcheva
- 10.30-10.50 Inflammation matters
Christina Grupcheva
- 10.50-11.10 What about the nerves
Maria Del Carmen Acosta
- 11.10-11.30 All is vicious circle
Nora Szentmary
- 11.30-12.00 The “best” artificial tears – patient’s perspective – discussion with patients’ involvement
- 12.00-12.20 **The long way to success treating ocular surface and glaucoma (in collaboration with SANTEN)**
Christina Grupcheva
- 12.20–12.30 Gratitude to sponsors and supporters
- 12.30-13.00 Progress on aniridia research and therapies for aniridia-associated keratopathy**
Neil Lagali
- 13.00-13.30 Packed lunch
- 13.30-14.00 **Key note lecture of the BSO “Genetic testing and consultations as a standard of care for people with rare eye disease”** Dr Petia Stratieva – RETINA Bulgaria
- 14.00-15.30 Session 6 Facilitating the quality of life – the multilevel perspective**
Panelists: Dr. Sabrina Vaccaro, Peter Netland
- 14.00-14.20 How to assess quality of life – European perspective
Dr. Sabrina Vaccaro
- 14.20-14.40 How to assess quality of life – US perspective
Peter Netland
- 14.40-15.00 How to assess quality of life – Asian perspective
Dr. Yoshinori Oie
- 15.00-15.30 How to achieve quality of life – Patient’s perspective
Daniel Egido, Katherine Atkinson

15.30-16.00 Coffee break and poster session 3

16.00-17.30 Session 7 – The Retina and Beyond

Panelists: Dominique BREMOND-GIGNAC, Alejandra Daruich, James Lauderdale

16.00-16.30 Retina in aniridia

Alejandra Daruich

16.30-17.00 Beyond the Eye: Pax6 Haploinsufficiency and Cortical and Neuroendocrine Function

James Lauderdale

17.00-17.30 Beyond the Iris: Managing the Full Spectrum of WAGR Syndrome (online or recording)

Kelly Trout, International WAGR Association

17.30-18.00 Interdisciplinary approach for better care – round table

Panelists: Nora Szentmary, Yoshinori Oie, Huban Atila

18.00-18.30 Session 8 Free presentations

Clinical-genetic forms of congenital aniridia in Bulgaria

Anna Popova

Restoring PAX6 expression via CRISPR activation: a road towards transparency

Catia Mio

18.30 Closure of day 2

19.00 Networking and introduction of Bulgarian folk culture and traditional remedies and herbs

DAY THREE – 19.04.2026

08.00-13.00 Registration and welcome

08.30-09.00 Session 9 New diagnostic approaches and therapeutic innovations

Panelists: Neil Lagali, Jim Lauderdale, Peter Netland

09.00-09.30 Follow-up of children with congenital aniridia – an interdisciplinary approach

Erlend Landsend (Online)

09.30-10.00 Diagnostics in aniridia

Fabian Fries

10.00-10.30 Coffee break and networking

10.30–11.00 Antisense oligonucleotide therapy in a mouse model of AAK

Ava Dashti

11.00-11.30 Antisense oligonucleotide therapy, from bench to clinic

Mert Mestanoglu

11.30-12.00 Patient-scientist discussion and questions

All speakers, panelists and patient associations/patients and families

12.00-13.00 Closing remarks and networking