

# University Ophthalmology Associates Celebrates 100 Years

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University Ophthalmology Associates celebrates its 100-year anniversary this summer. This enduring institution, an ophthalmology practice operated by generations of the Deutsch family, serves as a standard-bearer of patient care and expertise in the field and has long been a significant partner of Rush with a location in the Rush University Medical Center.

The practice was formed by Emil Deutsch, MD, who worked his way through medical school at a Hungarian restaurant and was aided by his brothers, who were both tradesmen. His grandson, “Thomas Deutsch, MD, said Emil was a pioneer in the medical profession. “Early in the 20th century,” he said, “it wasn’t common to study a specific area of interest. All of the practitioners studied the eyes, ears, nose and throat. That’s what we called double-ENT.”

Emil specifically trained to be an ophthalmologist and extended his education under Austrian specialist Ernst Fuchs before opening his own Chicago practice in July 1922. He soon moved the solo practice to what was then St. Luke’s Hospital. In 1955, his son, William E. Deutsch, MD, joined him after serving in Japan after the Korean War.

By the time St. Luke’s became Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke’s, Emil had died in 1977 at 85 years old. Continuing the family’s vocational tradition, in 1979, his grandson, Thomas, earned his medical degree from Rush Medical College and then completed his residency in ophthalmology at the Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary. Thomas joined the practice in 1984, and he and William moved the practice full-time to the Rush University Medical Center campus.

Since then, the Deutsch family has contributed extensively to the education and training of future Rush ophthalmologists. Thomas served as Henry P. Russe, MD, Dean of Rush Medical College for 14 years and as the provost for Rush University for 15 years, after having been associate dean for graduate medical education and chairman of ophthalmology. The practice’s dedication to training experts and promoting specialization in eye health has long attracted physicians while growing its reputation as a comprehensive anterior segment ophthalmology practice.

“My grandfather was trained to do basically anything an ophthalmologist did in the 1920s, my father was trained in the 1950s, and I was trained in the 1980s,” Thomas said. “At that time, I was the go-to person for every ophthalmology specialty. When we started recruiting people, we brought on people who can treat these complex diagnostic dilemmas of both surgical and medical eye diseases.”

University Ophthalmology now consists of 10 physicians, including Jonathan B. Rubenstein, MD, who subspecializes in corneal treatments and is the ophthalmology chairperson. The practice’s newest recruit is Thomas’s daughter, Rebecca Deutsch Sarran, MD, who graduated from Rush, completed her glaucoma fellowship at the University of Illinois, and has helped grow her family’s legacy as a member of the practice since September 2020.

Congratulations to this family of practitioners for its century-long legacy. Together with the Deutsch members, Rush is proud to foster a palpable family culture among its patients and physicians.