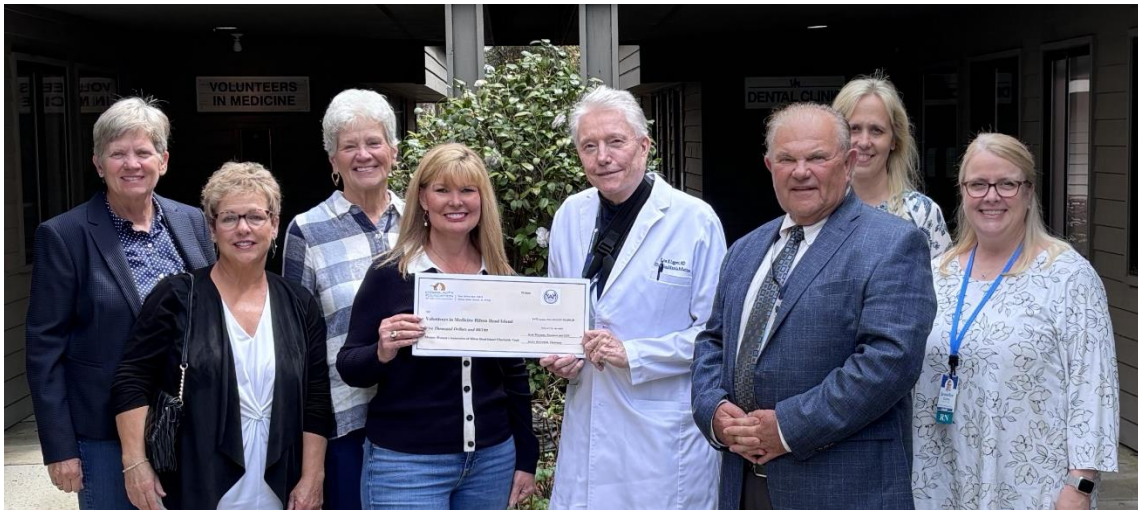


Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) Awarded \$5000 WAHHI Grant

By Janet Stallmeyer

A WAHHI Charitable Grant was awarded to VIM for their education program for women with diabetes. The goal is to identify those women with early signs of diabetes macular edema. Women account for 70% of the patients with diabetes seen and treated at VIM.

WAHHI's grant of \$5000 was used to acquire an ocular computerized tomography (OCT) device. This device is used to detect early signs of macular edema; the macula serves as the central vision area in the back of the eye. The device allows for early detection and treatment, thus allowing for intervention before the macular edema is too severe to curtail the progression of blindness.



VIM has built a deep, trusted relationship with the low-income, uninsured population of Hilton Head Island and the surrounding communities. Studies have shown that VIM HHI provides health care to about 70% of the local population that does not have access to health care, many because their employer does not provide health insurance or due to their immigration status.

VIM has served the diabetic population over the years. Included in their protocols has been a yearly exam by the eye doctors. Now with the addition of the OCT device, earlier detection of macular edema is possible. VIM operates a twice-weekly diabetes clinic, serving approximately 600 patients.

WAHHI's funding of this OCT device will benefit the community through two major avenues: early diagnosis of diabetic macular edema (DME), which is the leading cause of blindness in the USA of working age (20-64) patients; and decreased cost of health care due to early diagnosis. The World Health Organization estimates that 50% of the 15 million US patients with diabetes are under-diagnosed or lack eye care. The cost of treating early DME is \$800, vs. about \$11,000 for late DME.

WAHHI members, who presented the award to VIM clinical representatives, were the recipients of a presentation done by Dr. Liggett, the volunteer retinal physician. A treasured gift to the four of us! We were so impressed again by the health care being done by the VIM community. WAHHI women, through their giving to the Charitable Fund, will have a continued presence with our \$5000 award for the VIM Diabetes Education program for Women.