Dr Rohit Varma Receives National Award

Dr Rohit Varma, professor of ophthalmology and preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine, received the 2009 President’s Award from the Glaucoma Research Foundation.

The award, which acknowledges exemplary volunteer leadership, was presented by Tom Brunner, the foundation’s president, at the 31st anniversary celebration Jan. 28 in San Francisco. President George H. W. Bush, who was honorary national chairman of the celebration, introduced the ceremonies via a videotaped welcome.

Varma was honored for his leadership and commitment to a Glaucoma Awareness Day that grew out of his research. Varma’s recent Los Angeles Latino Eye Study (LALES), confirming that Latinos are among the highest at risk for glaucoma “is widely regarded as the definitive research on this subject,” Brunner said in presenting the award. The study was funded by the National Eye Institute.

Inspired by Varma’s urgent call to action, and with funding from Allergan, the Glaucoma Research Foundation hosted *Ver Es Poder (Seeing is Empowering)* this past May in Santa Ana. More than 350 people participated.

“Varma’s own selfless personal leadership in *Ver Es Poder* – giving previews of his research findings to community groups, mobilizing several Spanish-speaking physicians in his team at Doheny Eye Institute to volunteer their time in the screenings – set the highest example,” Brunner said.

At the Keck School’s Doheny Eye Institute, Varma is director of the Glaucoma Service, the Ocular Epidemiology Center and the Clinical Trials Unit. An expert on changes in the optic nerve in glaucoma, he is studying new imaging techniques in the early diagnosis of optic nerve damage. Varma also has been involved in the development of novel implantable intraocular pressure sensors and drainage devices.

Glaucoma is the leading preventable cause of blindness in the United States. For 30 years, the Glaucoma Research Foundation has funded innovative clinical, epidemiological and laboratory research.