

Robert Grant

The chief executive officer and president of Bausch + Lomb Surgical reflects on the milestones of the cataract and refractive surgery industry.



How did you come to pursue a career in the ophthalmic industry?

I joined the ophthalmic industry in the early 1990s when I was appointed as the Asia-Pacific sales and marketing manager of HGM Medical Lasers in Salt Lake City. I recall attending my first AAO meeting in Chicago; I was drawn to the technological focus and pace of innovation within the industry. I also very much liked my interactions and relationships with ophthalmologists, and I was intrigued by the macro-transition to less-invasive procedures and the shift toward ambulatory surgery centers and office-based technologies. Although I left ophthalmology for 4 years in the mid-90s to work in Japan and Australia for a pacemaker company, I was drawn back to this industry again and again, once as a board member for Coherent Medical Group/Wavelight, Inc. and now with Bausch + Lomb Surgical, because of my high interest in the opportunity to lead and shape the future of ophthalmology.

What is your most memorable experience in ophthalmology?

So many come to mind: the advent of PRK and its FDA approval in 1995, the transition to aesthetic procedures with CO₂ and erbium technologies in 1996, the direct-to-consumer advertising for refractive surgeries in late 1998 through 1999 by Visx, Inc., procedure-fee reduction for LASIK in 2000, the cessation of direct-to-consumer investment from the manufacturers in 2001, the advent of wavefront and all-laser LASIK with IntraLase lasers, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' May 2005 ruling for balanced billing with the Crystalens and other PCIOLs. The industry has come a long way during the past 20 years, demonstrating that both clinicians and patients desire outstanding and predictable clinical outcomes.

What would you change about the ophthalmic industry if you could?

We at Bausch + Lomb Surgical focus our efforts on growing the whole pie rather than only our piece of it. Too much of the industry is still in the red-ocean stage; they are concentrating on one extra point of market share, instead of doing things to meaningfully grow the

market. Ours is in an industry still barely penetrated in refractive surgery. Although this situation is improving dramatically, we can do more to address the quality-of-vision challenges that we still face in both cataract and refractive surgery, like glare and halo. We should all reach for predictable 20/20 vision by the year 2020. This will enable us as an industry to meet and exceed the expectations of patients, as the baby boomer population (78 million strong) requires better vision later in their lives.

In what ways will the ophthalmic industry evolve in the near future?

It will change from addressing procedure-based medical needs to providing patients with options that enhance their outcomes and quality of life. Patients will demand better and more predictable outcomes. People are living longer, and more of them face "diabesity" (obesity-related type II diabetes). These megatrends are dramatically increasing the cost of health care. As an industry, it is time for us to raise the bar on outcomes to the point that patients will pursue premium and predictable outcomes and experiences. The convergence and ultimate marriage of advanced diagnostic technologies such as optical coherence tomography, ray tracing, and minimally invasive treatment modalities like femtosecond laser technology will drive this trend forward at a rapid pace. The shift will require investments, however, both from industry and individual practitioners in order to be fully realized.

What would you like to accomplish over the next 5 years?

We industry representatives are standing on a great precipice. We have an incredible opportunity to improve patients' outcomes and experiences, and they are willing to pay out of pocket for superior results. However, we will need to overcome the impediments to large-scale premium-channel cataract and refractive adoption, which are a lack of predictable visual outcomes and challenges in terms of quality of vision. At Bausch + Lomb Surgical, we would like to become the global leaders in patient-centric procedures for vision rejuvenation around age- and diabetes-related eye conditions. We need to develop therapies made "smart" by their integration with cutting-edge diagnostic technologies, all in a minimally invasive way and environment. ■