

William J. Lahnners, MD

Dr. Lahnners reflects on how his childhood affected his decision to enter ophthalmology and on his international experiences.



Why did you choose ophthalmology as a profession?

When I was in second grade, I began to have school phobia. I can still remember being terrified to go to school. Someone suggested I get my eyes tested, and a myopic pair of spectacles later, I was a happy second grader again! I do not remember seeing many other doctors, but I remember seeing my ophthalmologist yearly. Richard Hesse, MD, the chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology at Ochsner Medical Center in New Orleans, impressed me and always encouraged my interest in medicine. It was a combination of this life-changing second-grade event, Dr. Hesse, and the endless support of my mom and dad that inspired me to become an ophthalmologist. I knew before the first day of medical school what my specialty was going to be.

What do you find most challenging in your field?

The most challenging aspect of refractive surgery is, sometimes, psychology! Interacting with so many different people of various backgrounds, educating them about the surgery, managing their expectations, and guiding them through their recovery can frequently be more difficult than the surgery. Throw in delayed recovery, side effects (even expected ones), or unusual personalities, and things get really interesting.

What is your most memorable international experience?

Aviation is a passion of mine, and I will never forget the first time I flew my first plane to the Bahamas. Although I had received a private pilot license some 18 years earlier, the ink on my new multiengine commercial license was still wet, and I had less than 50 hours' experience in my new multiengine airplane. The flight was a great experience and a trip I will never forget.

What is something most people are surprised to learn about you?

Thanks to a combination of thin corneas, high myopia, low endothelial cell counts, and relatively large pupils, I am stuck in glasses and contact lenses. It is a

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cruel irony that I do not qualify for refractive surgery. About once a year, I have a dream that I suddenly qualify for LASIK and achieve great results from the procedure. Then, I wake up and reach blindly for my glasses.

How do you like to spend your leisure time?

Flying absolutely consumes me. It is challenging, intellectual, and exhilarating. I have a wonderful wife and two great kids who have embraced aviation with me and are always ready to travel to new destinations! ■

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