

5 Questions With David W. Shoemaker, MD

Dr. Shoemaker discusses his passion for practicing ophthalmology and his commitment to providing sight-saving surgery and financial support to patients in need.



What inspired you to found the Center For Sight?

The inspiration behind the founding of the Center For Sight is best captured by the practice's mission statement, which is to bring clear vision to life through caring and trusting relationships and the unending

pursuit of excellence in eye care. These were our marching orders 30 years ago, and my colleagues and I are still working with enthusiasm each day to deliver this promise to our patients. To quote my wife, who often muses on the lessons from the classroom of life, "One hopes never to get an A+ or to graduate, for there is always more to learn." Every day, I learn something new and am inspired by my patients.

What is the mission of the Center For Sight Foundation?

The Foundation's mission is to see beyond financial circumstances so that no one suffers from visual loss due to a surgically treatable condition. In a sense, this organization is an extension of Mission Cataract USA. The Center For Sight Foundation, however, serves patients with all treatable conditions—not just cataracts—and most importantly provides financial support.

The Foundation is a product of our time in that recent government regulations designed to limit industry's influence on physicians have had unintended consequences and prohibit our medical device and pharmaceutical partners from donating necessary drugs and devices for charitable use. The Foundation was established to step into this void by providing support to physicians who qualify by assembling their own surgical teams. Care is provided locally by those teams, and the Foundation provides all necessary supplies, devices, and pharmaceuticals. We are excited about the potential and look forward to rolling out this program nationwide this year. Interested surgeons may apply by going to www.CFSFoundation.org.

What has been the greatest achievement of your professional career thus far?

The greatest achievement of my professional career lies not in the realm of science, innovation, or teaching, but rather in the role of delivering the care made pos-

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sible by the scientists, innovators, and teachers I have been privileged to know. Two principles have guided my practice: put patients first and frame all decisions to be a win-win scenario. The end result is a compassionate yet efficient delivery system. I love my work and am thankful for the sense of purpose it provides. Looking forward, I believe health care will evolve into a two-tiered system. The shared-responsibility tier will provide capital and serve to ensure that incentives for excellence and innovation continue. The insured tier will benefit as these enhancements flow through the system and essentially underwrite the overall health care market. Our entire profession and the patients we serve owe a true debt to Andy Corley and others for making shared patient responsibility a reality.

How have recent studies influenced your surgical technique or the technology that you use?

The commercialization of the femtosecond laser for cataract and lens replacement surgery is the most recent influence on my practice. This technology will forever change our profession, and I find it impossible to stay on the sidelines. At Center For Sight, we chose to wait for the Lensar platform (Lensar, Inc.) and are delighted with our decision. Our first 600 cases were flawless, with free floating capsulotomies and no posterior capsular openings. We look forward to our ability to address astigmatism with true limbal-based relaxing incisions. I believe the real power and differentiation of the femtosecond laser will be found here.

What are your favorite outdoor activities?

You will find me in, on, or around the water rowing a single scull or kayak, most likely in Sarasota Bay. I can also be found on a road bike dodging traffic. Wherever I am, you will also find my best friend and the love of my life, my wife, Yara, who has been my greatest teacher and gift. ■