

WILLIAMSON EYE CENTER

A culture of innovation and community drives continual growth.

BY JOSHUA DAVIDSON, OD, FSLC

In health care, the mantra, “If you’re not growing, you’re dying,” is embraced by successful organizations around the globe. Growth has been a priority for Williamson Eye Center through its entire 68-year existence. As an optometrist and a newcomer to the practice—I’ve been part of the team for almost a year now—I have been astonished by our ability to continually exceed patient expectations at each of our four (soon to be five) locations across Louisiana.

A QUICK HISTORY

In 1951, William Williamson, OD, built one of the first multilocation eye practices in southern Louisiana. *Doc*, as he was called, was first and foremost the father of four boys who followed in his footsteps into eye care. Three of his sons returned to Louisiana to practice ophthalmology, and one is a physician assistant. *Doc*’s grandson is also a surgeon at Williamson Eye, meaning that three generations of Williamsons provide vision care in the Baton Rouge and middle Louisiana areas.

Williamson Eye Center has become one of the South’s largest and most respected eye centers. It has earned

global recognition for its innovative surgical techniques, pioneering procedures, teaching practices, and adoption of the latest technologies. Williamson Eye continues to push ophthalmology and its own practice brand to new levels.

THE SECRET OF OUR SUCCESS

Williamson Eye Center does the common thing—providing service to our patients—uncommonly well. Our practice sees patients from all walks of life. We strive to provide both cataract and refractive surgery patients with modern options for vision correction by offering them personal service.

Having worked previously in other practices that also provide exceptional surgical care, I have found that the difference at Williamson Eye is the family environment that our staff and patients take part in. This environment is at the core of our business model. Our practice is built not only on innovation and technology but also on providing genuine care for our patients’ welfare. Instead of being built on the bottom line, our culture is built on this principle: If you take care of people, employees, and patients as

family, your efforts will be rewarded with loyalty and success (Figures 1–4).

On any given day at work, it’s not unusual for me to see three generations of Williamson patients in my examination rooms. This type of longevity doesn’t occur without a good foundation of trust in our primary mission, which is to improve the vision and the lives of our patients and our community.

PRACTICE AT A HIGH LEVEL

As an OD and the newest provider within the Williamson Eye Care family, I have been encouraged to practice up to the highest level of professional practice that I am comfortable with. I chose Louisiana over my native Michigan because it has some of the most progressive laws favoring optometric practice. I met my beautiful wife and started my family and career here.

Sure, it is important to my success that I have modern technology available to me when treating patients, but equally important is that I also have mentors to learn from.

Williamson Eye is home to me, and I am sure the same might be said for our other 14 providers. Practicing

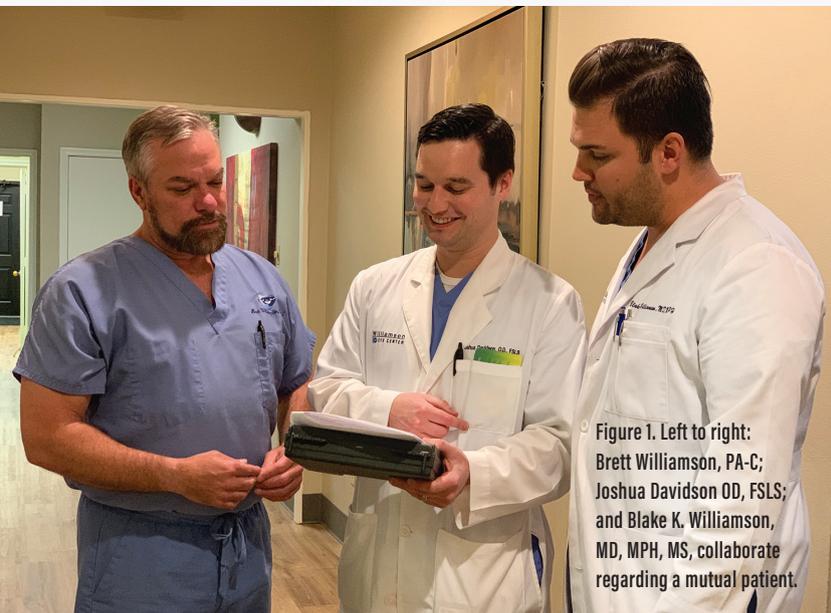


Figure 1. Left to right: Brett Williamson, PA-C; Joshua Davidson OD, FSLC; and Blake K. Williamson, MD, MPH, MS, collaborate regarding a mutual patient.

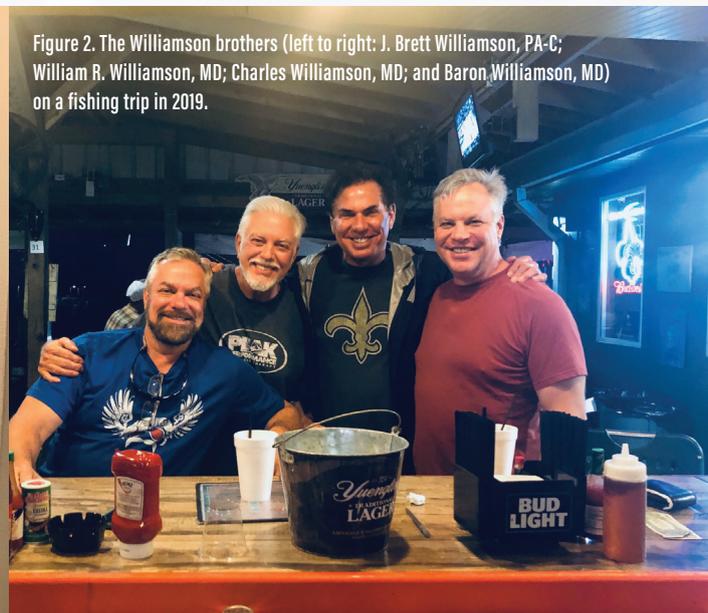


Figure 2. The Williamson brothers (left to right: J. Brett Williamson, PA-C; William R. Williamson, MD; Charles Williamson, MD; and Baron Williamson, MD) on a fishing trip in 2019.

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Figure 3. The Williamson Eye practitioners in 2017: (back row) Vincent Rachal, OD; William R. Williamson, MD; Charles Williamson, MD; Blake K. Williamson, MD, MPH, MS; J. Brett Williamson, PA-C; and Christine Norred, OD; (front row) Elizabeth Granger, OD; Edwin Adams, OD; Matthew Smith, MD; Cory Boudreaux, OD.

and being successful under the brand Williamson Eye no longer requires the last name Williamson. My colleague, Blake Booth, MD, our practice’s newest surgeon, previously worked in other practices, and he explained to me that the difference at Williamson Eye is that the team understands the importance of combining highly advanced care with a patient-centered experience. Our team approach employs the skills of every one of us in order to achieve the best outcomes for our patients.

Charles Williamson, MD, the practice’s medical and surgical director and a practicing physician for more than 40 years, has the same vision his father had, and he has carried on the practice’s positive culture. That vision has helped guide the practice’s exponential growth since the middle of the past century. Charles believes that we are

not in business to compete but rather to provide superior patient care.

One of the first pieces of advice Charles gave to me was regarding handling patients who had left another practice to come to us: Despite the situation, never throw any of your colleagues or competitors under the bus; our job is not to ruffle feathers but to smooth them down. Despite what other providers do, practice the way you would want to experience if you were the patient.

Charles believes that the true purpose of leadership is mentoring to produce more leaders, not more followers.

CONCLUSION

In the constantly changing environment of health care, a culture of innovation and community continues to



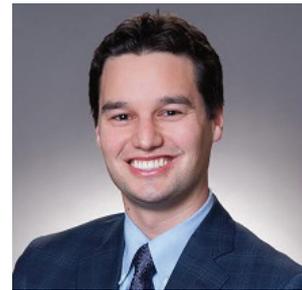
Figure 4. The main surgery center with practitioners outside.

permeate Williamson Eye. Riding the ascendancy of technology and being early adopters and innovators of cataract and refractive surgery procedures such as laser cataract surgery, lifestyle IOLs, and microinvasive glaucoma surgery, the Williamson Eye name

has become synonymous with state-of-the-art vision care through ethical care for our patients.

Our community and our patients have learned that Williamson Eye offers them the best visual outcomes in a family environment.

The Williamson Eye staff has been trained and steeped in that philosophy. Our culture of innovation, integrity, and treating patients and staff as family has led to three generations of success. Every staff member knows that, although there is no CPT code for patient happiness and satisfaction, that's priority No. 1 at Williamson Eye. ■



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