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## **Dancing at The "EyeBall", Life Lessons From A Dancing Laser Eye Surgeon**





*"In that effort, we created the "EyeBall," an annual fundraising gala for our non-profit charity, the Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration for which all participating doctors donate our services. The EyeBall combines the spectacular beauty of ballroom dancing with the critically important need to help the blind to see. When you come to an EyeBall, you see people in ballgowns and tails, and breathtakingly elegant and beautiful ballroom dancing, which reminds us how important it is to have sight since without it, we would not be able to see any of this beauty, so we are reminded of how important it is to help those who have lost their sight. We love that the name "EyeBall" is fun and meaningful, and it is a clever way of combining the beauty of dance and music with the beauty of sight."*

*I had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Ming Wang, MD, PhD, director of internationally known Wang Vision 3D Cataract & LASIK Center—an Aier-USA eye clinic in Nashville, Tennessee—and one of the few cataract and LASIK surgeons in the world today who holds a doctorate degree in laser physics. Dr. Wang has performed over 55,000 procedures, over 4,000 of which were on doctors, so he has been referred to as the "doctors' doctor." He has published 8 textbooks and over 100 scientific papers, including one in the world-renowned journal "Nature." Dr. Wang holds several U.S. patents, and performed the world's first laser artificial corneal*

*implantation. He received the honor award from the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Chinese American Physicians, and was named the Kiwanis Nashvillian of the Year for his work in helping blind orphan children from around the world. He founded a 501c(3) non-profit organization, which to date has helped patients from over 40 states in the U.S. and 55 countries worldwide, with all sight restoration surgeries performed free-of-charge.*

**Thank you so much for doing this interview with us, Dr. Wang!  
What is your backstory?**

I grew up in Communist China. As a teenager, I fought to escape one of history's darkest eras—China's Cultural Revolution—during which millions of innocent youth were deported to remote areas to face a life sentence of poverty and hard labor. Through my own tenacity and my parents' tireless efforts to provide a chance of freedom for me, I eventually made my way to America with only \$50 and a Chinese-English dictionary in my pocket, but with a big American dream in my heart. Against all odds, I received a PhD in laser physics and graduated magna cum laude with the highest honors from Harvard Medical School and MIT. My life story is described in my autobiography—From Darkness to Sight—which can be purchased on [www.fromdarknesstosight.com](http://www.fromdarknesstosight.com), the proceeds of which are donated to my sight restoration foundation. We are actually in the process of making a full-length feature film based on my autobiography.

I am currently a laser eye surgeon and the director of Wang Vision 3D Cataract & LASIK Center, an Aier-USA eye clinic in Nashville, TN ([www.wangcataractLASIK.com](http://www.wangcataractLASIK.com)). We are the only center in the state that offers 3D SMILE, 3D LASIK, 3D KAMRA, 3D Forever Young Lens surgery and 3D laser cataract surgery.

**Can you share the funniest or most interesting story of something that has happened since you started your company?**

I love ballroom dancing, and actually learned to dance during China's Cultural Revolution, but dancing became a hobby to me after I came to America ([www.dancinginthelight.org](http://www.dancinginthelight.org)). I co-founded the Harvard University and MIT ballroom dance team, and we won the U.S. collegiate championship.

For many years, I wanted to find a way to combine my passion for



ballroom dancing with my passion for helping patients' sight to be restored, and the joy of bringing them from darkness to light. As an ophthalmologist, I constantly worked in dark rooms, determining my patients' prescriptions by doing measurements to decide whether they were 20/25, 20/30 or 20/40. After a while, I asked myself, "Is human eyesight really just a matter of numbers, or is it a visceral, emotional and indispensable part of the human experience? Without sight, we are not able to enjoy much of the experience of being a human! So I wanted to figure out how I could bring the effort of sight restoration out of an eye doctor's dark exam room, and into the broader scope of society, in order to get people to be excited about their vision, and to help restore sight to those who have lost it so they too can experience joy and happiness in their lives.

In that effort, we created the "EyeBall," an annual fundraising gala for our non-profit charity, the Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration ([www.wangfoundation.com](http://www.wangfoundation.com)), for which all participating doctors donate our services. The EyeBall combines the spectacular beauty of ballroom dancing with the critically important need to help the blind to see. When you come to an EyeBall, you see people in ballgowns and tails, and breathtakingly elegant and beautiful ballroom dancing, which reminds us how important it is to have sight since without it, we would not be able to see any of this beauty, so we are reminded of how important it is to help those who have lost their sight.

We love that the name "EyeBall" is fun and meaningful, and it is a clever way of combining the beauty of dance and music with the beauty of sight.



**What do you think makes your company stand out? Can you share a story?**

Passion and technology. We are passionate about helping our patients improve their eyesight. Vision is what the majority of human beings consider their most important sense, and through efforts such as our 501c(3) non-profit sight foundation and our annual EyeBall, we have helped patients throughout the world, and all sight restoration surgeries are performed free-of-charge.

We offer the most advanced, state-of-the-art surgical technology, which produces the best vision for our patients. Because of my background as a laser physicist, I am a unique eye surgeon because of my knowledge of medicine and lasers, how the lasers work, and how to

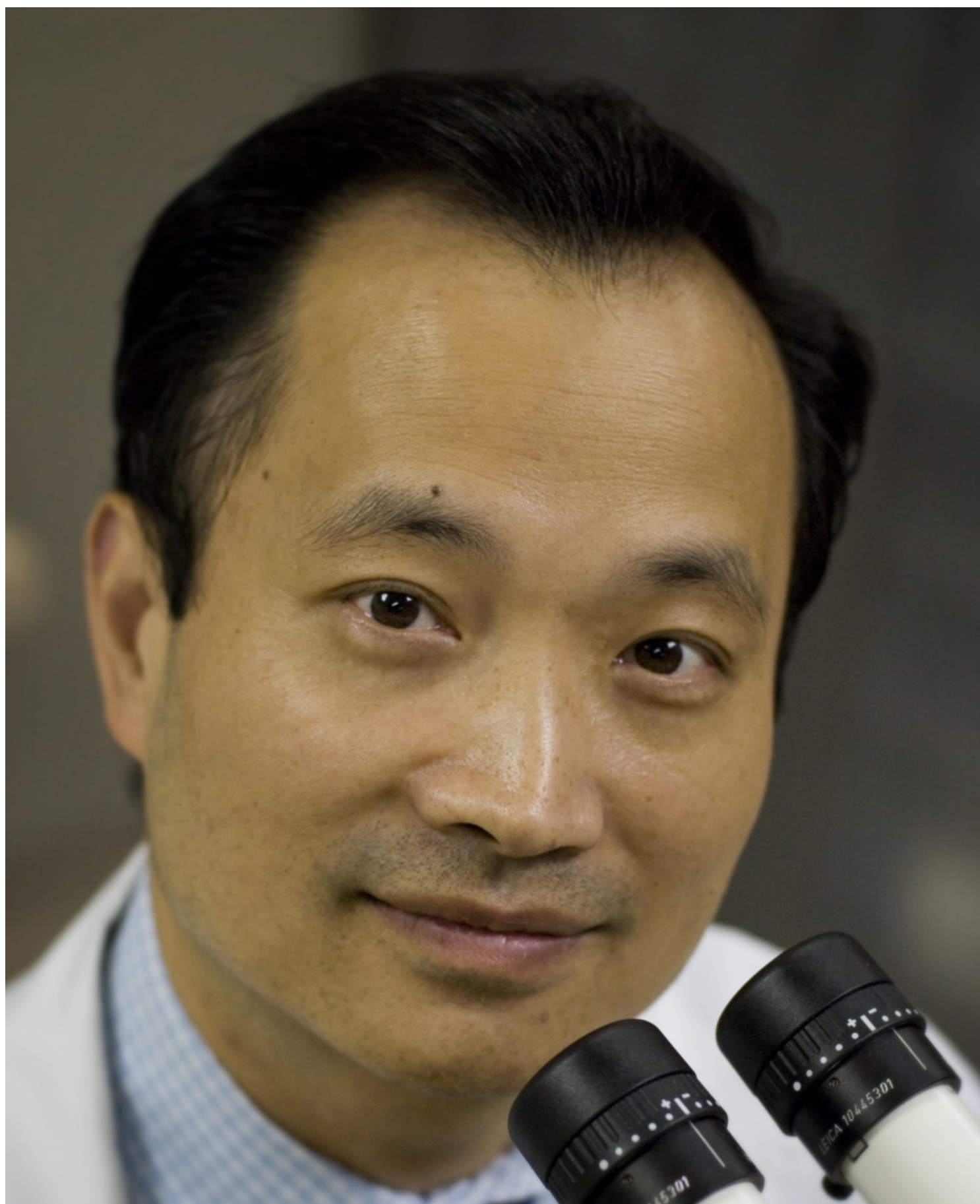
customize the technology to the specific needs of each patient. In recent decades, we introduced to the state most of the breakthrough laser eye surgery technology that we offer, and we are currently the only center that offers 3D laser eye procedures for the entire age spectrum: 3D SMILE and 3D LASIK (18+), 3D KAMRA (45+), 3D Forever Young Lens surgery (50+), and 3D laser cataract surgery (60+).

**None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are grateful to for helping you get to where you are? Can you share a story?**

My patients. I am grateful to all of the patients I have had the privilege and honor to help over the years. For example, several years ago we heard about Maria, a 15-year-old blind orphan from Moldova. Maria was born into poverty and poor nutrition, and when she became a teenager, she was sent to live in an orphanage. At the time we heard Maria's story, she was just one year away from turning 16, the age which meant she could no longer live in the orphanage and would be completely on her own. Many teenage girls like Maria end up being victims of human trafficking and prostitution, a devastating fate which awaited Maria as well.

Through the generous hearts of Christian missionaries, Steve and Lynn Hendrich, Maria was able to come to the U.S. to be seen at our Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration. We performed an exceedingly difficult sight restoration surgery and with God's blessing, Maria's eyesight was restored! When she saw herself in the mirror for the first time, she exclaimed "Sunt frumoasa" ("I am so beautiful" in Romanian).

Few of us will ever personally know someone who has had his/her sight restored after a lifetime of blindness. Even fewer of us will ever be present at the very moment someone we know comes out of darkness and into sight. To me, such a moment makes all the decades of hard work, training, research, and sleepless nights I have endured worthwhile. I am grateful for all my patients, and they are my best teachers, constantly reminding me how blessed I am to have sight and freedom, and how much I need to appreciate these things by working harder to try to help more blind orphans.







**Do you have a favorite book that has made a deep impact on your life? Can you share a story?**

Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*. It made a deep impact on my life because the struggles of a young architect, Howard Roark, taught me that we should not just do things in ways that people in the past have done them. Our goals should progress with finding ways to do things that fit the needs of the people of our time. We should be innovative, bold and passionate about what we do.

**What is on your list of “5 things I wish someone had told me before I started my own company” and why? Please share a story or example for each.**

I actually have ten, so I hope that's OK! They are as follows:

1. In partnership, the person is more important than the project.  
In partnership, who your partner is is more important than what you will be doing together. Examine the character of a potential partner before entering into a business relationship with him/her. With the right partner, you may be able to do the right thing; however, with the wrong partner, you may never be able to do the right thing.
2. In solving a problem, the matter is more important than the person.  
When addressing a problem, you should not focus on the personal attributes of the individual who made the mistake. If you do, you will place the focus on the person himself/herself, which may incite his/her ego and create an emotional barrier that could cause him/her to never be able to see the issue itself. Therefore, you should focus on the issue instead of the person. The goal is to solve the problem and improve the

system, not to blame a particular person.

3. Life is a two-way street.

If you need someone to assist you with your project, you first need to do everything you can to help that person with his/her project. Then he/she will be more inclined to help you with yours. A person who always wants to just take but not give will never be successful.

4. Focus ONLY on what YOU do, and the things you CAN control.

Don't worry about what others do, focus ONLY on what you yourself can do. Do not waste any time on things that are not under your control; focus ONLY on things you CAN do or change.

5. Always be prepared with a back-up plan.

Whatever you do, go into it fully prepared, with at least a plan B, and sometimes even a plan C. When something unexpected happens and you are not already prepared with an alternative plan, going "back to the drawing board" is a total waste of time!

6. A frog at the bottom of a well

Each of us is a "frog at the bottom of a well," i.e., our perspective, basis for judgment and opinions are limited by our own experience and exposure. We look up and see a small round patch of clear sky and believe it is a beautiful day! However, when we climb out of the well and up to ground level, and are now able to look around at the ENTIRE sky, we may realize it is actually a cloudy day! We see that the small patch of sky that we were able to see earlier when we were at the bottom of the well was actually not at all representative of the whole situation!

7. Left and right brains:  $1 + 1 > 2$ !

A right-brain dominant person is supposed to be creative and artistic, and one who is considered left-brained is rational and logical. However, we should not be limited by these classifications, e.g., "I am a right-brained person, so I am not good at logical things." Instead, engage your right-brain to help you with logical tasks, such as applying artistry to precision eye surgery; and summon your left-brain to help your creative work, such as applying mechanical and physics principles when learning ballroom dancing. Rather than treating them as two isolated halves, our right- and left- brains are meant to work TOGETHER, synergistically. It is a situation where  $1 + 1$  actually equals MORE THAN 2!"

#### 8. A truly fair business deal

A truly fair business deal is one in which you can picture yourself stepping into your partner's shoes, and when you look at the deal from his/her perspective, it is still fair. In all human interactions, always be willing to look at things from the other person's perspective.

#### 9. To be successful is to work selectively.

People say that to be successful, one has to be talented and work hard. While these are indeed two of the top three qualities needed to be successful, NEITHER is actually number one! The most important thing to do if you want success is to work intelligently, by selecting only a few things to focus on, and doing the best you can with those things. The goal is not to continue adding to your to-do list, but rather to work on reducing the amount of things on your list until there is nothing left.

#### 10. Maximal alignment, minimal work

In a business collaboration, maximal alignment of interests in the beginning produces minimal work later. The opposite is also true, i.e., minimal alignment of interests among the various parties early on often ends up necessitating a lot of often unproductive work later.

**Some of the biggest names in business, VC funding, sports and entertainment read this column. Is there a person in the world, or in the U.S. with whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch, and why? He or she might see this. :-)**

Mark Zuckerberg, since his journey in founding Facebook truly inspired me and helped me to realize that life is not about technology, but rather, it is about human psychology and need. I would love to meet him sometime. His wife, Dr. Pricilla Chan, is actually a Chinese American as well.

**This was very inspiring. Thank you so much for joining us!**





