

# M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS



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VISION INSTITUTE, PLLC

**Dr. Ming Wang**

A Man with a Vision, and a Renaissance Man



# Dr. Ming Wang

## A Man with a Vision, and a Renaissance Man

By Tonya Poole

Some 20 years ago, Ming Wang, then just a young man, arrived in the United States from China with little more than a Chinese-English dictionary and \$50 in his pocket. With no friends or family in the country, Wang set out to obtain for himself the education and opportunity denied to him back home and to avoid the devastating fate of deportation to remote provinces that awaited so many Chinese youth of this time.

His courage and determination paid off. Having graduated *magna cum laude* from MIT and Harvard, Wang went on to become one of only a few LASIK surgeons worldwide with a doctorate degree in laser physics. His medical training record was impeccable and unmatched, having been trained in three of the top four ophthalmological institutes in the United States (medical school at Harvard in Boston, MA, residency at Wills Eye Hospital in

Philadelphia, PA, and corneal fellowship at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in Miami, FL). A clinical associate professor of ophthalmology at the University of Tennessee and an attending surgeon at Saint Thomas Hospital, Dr. Wang is an active researcher who has published numerous peer-reviewed articles, including one in the world-renowned journal *Nature*.

Wang Vision Institute, a world-class laser vision surgery center, has attracted patients from over 40 states in the United States and from over 55 countries worldwide to date. Dr. Wang dedicates himself to teaching and education, offering the state's only cornea fellowship training program. He has personally taught and trained over 3,000 surgeons worldwide and has performed the first bladeless LASIK surgery in China (with a population of 1.3 billion people). Doctors fly in from around

**Dr. Wang learned to play the er-hu, a Chinese violin, as a teenager to escape the devastating fate of being deported for a life of misery by the communist government decades ago.**



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the world to be trained and certified at the institute, where Dr. Wang has performed more than 25,000 LASIK procedures and more than 3,000 of those on fellow physicians.

The first Eye Ball, an annual fundraising event of the Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration (a 501(c)(3) charitable organization), took place in the fall of 2005 to raise funds to help corneal blind patients who had been diagnosed as irreversibly corneal blind and could no longer be helped with conventional surgeries, and who have come from around the world to Nashville to undergo novel sight restoration surgeries performed free of charge by Dr. Wang. Dr. Wang performed the world's first femtosecond laser artificial cornea implantation, which restored vision in a patient who had been blind for 40 years.

Brad Barnes, a 34-year-old patient from St. Louis, MO, is one such patient. Having suffered a severe thermal injury 12 years ago, Brad became terminally corneal blind with minimal light perception in both eyes, even after numerous surgeries at Harvard, Mayo Clinic and Washington University. Several years ago, he married Jackie (whom he had never seen), who devoted herself to Brad's care and to his lifelong faith and struggle to seek help so he could see again. In 2005, Brad was referred to Dr. Wang by doctors at Washington University (in his hometown of St. Louis), to consider undergoing the femtosecond laser arti-



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cial cornea implantation procedure. Waiving all of his surgery and care charges, Dr. Wang worked with the Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration and provided Brad with all the necessary financial resources (including travel and lodging) to enable him to have the surgery. Working with an ENT surgeon at Washington University, Dr. Wang and his team performed the world's first combined saliva-gland transposition and femtosecond laser artificial cornea implantation, offering Brad a chance to see his wife Jackie for the first time.

In addition to developing innovative technologies for terminally corneal blind patients, Dr. Wang is active in the area of LASIK vision correction as well. He was chosen by ABC as the LASIK surgeon of choice for its national reality show "Extreme Makeover." Dr. Wang was one of the first surgeons in the United States to perform a revolutionary new vision correction procedure, bladeless LASIK, which eliminated the use of any surgical blade in a LASIK procedure. Dr. Wang introduced bladeless LASIK surgery to the state four years ago and has been performing it longer than any other surgeon in the state.

As one of the few LASIK surgeons in the world today who has dual doctorate degrees in both medicine and laser physics, Dr. Wang takes full advantage of his unique combined training and participates actively in research and development of new eye surgery technologies. He was a member of the U.S. FDA Ophthalmic Device Panel and was a primary reviewer for the FDA's historical U.S. approval of LASIK in 1999.

Dr. Wang was the first in the world to perform a new eye procedure, femtosecond laser Intacs corneal rings on a keratoconus graft, to help restore vision in patients who suffer from the genetic and progressively blinding condition, keratoconus. This new treatment represents the first procedure ever designed to address the root cause of the keratoconus disease, corneal wall weakness, and to reduce the need for an invasive corneal transplantation surgery with its associated risk of the lifelong chance of corneal transplantation rejection.

Recently, Dr. Wang also became one of the first surgeons in



**Dr. Wang has been a finalist in the U.S. National Ballroom Dance Championship (in pro-am open international 10-dance).**



the United States to perform the implantable contact lens (ICL) after the recent FDA approval. ICL is a revolutionary new technology designed to help patients who could not be helped with LASIK due to their advanced vision problems.

An accomplished researcher, Dr. Wang holds a U.S. patent for his invention of the amniotic contact lens, a new biotechnology that reduces corneal trauma-caused blindness, and made the world's first prototype. He authored and edited several books, including *Corneal Dystrophy — a Molecular Genetic Approach*, published by the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and the recent *Corneal Topography in the Wavefront Era*, published by the world's largest ophthalmic book publisher, SLACK, Inc. Called the "CT scan for corneal surgeons," corneal topography has undergone explosive technological advances in recent years and has enabled corneal surgeons to see higher resolution structures within the cornea. Dr. Wang's new topography textbook was the No. 1 bestseller at the recent annual meeting of the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, an international meeting of the leaders in cataract and refractive surgery.

No stranger to breaking the mold and shattering old ideas, Dr. Wang's achievements encompass more than medical success. He is also passionate with his personal hobbies — ballroom dancing and music. As a medical student at Harvard, he co-founded the Harvard University ballroom dance team, which went on to win the U.S. National Collegiate Championship. As the President of the Music City Chapter of the United States Amateur Ballroom Dancers Association, a national nonprofit organization promoting amateur ballroom dancing, Dr. Wang helps teach ballroom dancing to both adults and children. An avid ballroom competitor himself, he was a finalist in the U.S. National Ballroom Dance Championship (in pro-am open international 10-dance).

The er-hu, a Chinese violin that Dr. Wang learned to play as a teenager to escape the devastating fate of being deported for a life of misery by the communist government decades ago, has now become his musical hobby. His most recent musical ven-



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ture included playing his er-hu with Dolly Parton as she sang an old Civil War country song, "The Cruel War," that appears on Dolly's most recent album, which is a wonderful story of today's ever-changing world of East and West.

Whether burning it up on the dance floor or restoring vision on the surgical table, Dr. Wang's passion and commitment to improving the quality of life of everyone around him is unmistakable. He contributes generously to the community and was nominated by NPR in 2006 as the "Philanthropist of the Year." And for a man whose convictions have carried him faster and farther than most, Dr. Wang remains steadfastly true to his vision of a better life and a better world, with unique opportunities for all of us to find and reach our potential.

"I love medicine, I love taking care of my patients and I love dancing," he says. "It's fun to be different, to be yourself."

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