

WILLIAM F. WILEY^{MD}

Dr. Wiley has been involved early on with many technologies, including corneal inlays, accommodating IOLs, and, the most recent, small-incision lenticule extraction (SMILE). He's also pioneered many procedures in Northeast Ohio and was the first in Cleveland to perform laser cataract surgery and implant the Light Adjustable Lens (now RxLAL; RxSight), Tecnis multifocal (Johnson & Johnson Vision), and Crystalens (Bausch + Lomb) IOLs. In this interview, Dr. Wiley talks about growing up in an ophthalmology family, the joys of ice cream, and the roots of his interest in the Dave Matthews Band.



INTERVIEWED BY LAURA STRAUB, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, *CRST/CRST EUROPE*



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BMC: Who or what drew you to ophthalmology?

WILLIAM F. WILEY, MD: I grew up in an ophthalmology family. My father was an ophthalmologist, and living in a household with that exposure to the field was a big influence. There are several legacy ophthalmologists in practice now. Part of this is that ophthalmology provides a nice lifestyle, and the other part is that it's an innovative field with constant introduction of new technologies. Ophthalmologists tend to be happy with their career choices, and that satisfaction trickles down to their children.

In medical school, you get little exposure to ophthalmology. Most medical students don't think about this field as a career—it's sort of an outlier specialty. It's hard to study for, the exams are complicated, and the equipment is hard to use. Many people rotating through ophthalmology are turned off by those things. If you grow up with it, you have a baseline understanding that allows

you to catch on quickly in med school and residency. Often, people gravitate toward things that they understand or excel at, so that was part of it for me.

BMC: How did your father's career influence yours?

WILEY: The way he practiced ophthalmology was reflective of my own interests. He was early into refractive surgery, a field that gained popularity in the late 1980s into the '90s. He was the first in our region to do RK. Actually, I'm a patient of RK: I had it done on my eyes, by my father, when I was in college. My father was also a pioneer in optometric comanagement at a time when there was a huge divide between optometry and ophthalmology. There still is some, but it's more collegial now. Back then, it was unusual for ophthalmologists to work closely with optometry. Having been exposed to the other alternative at an early age helped guide my own choices later. Now I'm partnered with optometry within our practice and work with community optometrists as well.

Lastly, my father's innovative spirit influenced me. When I was in high school, we worked on some patents together. He had a patent for an adjustable-focus IOL. He and I would brainstorm and try to figure out, "What kind of technology could allow a lens to be adjusted inside the eye?" We looked at electronic- and light-adjustable methods. This was years before that type of technology became reality. But through that experience, I was able to see that a solo private practitioner could help guide the field or innovate technology in the field. So that also guided my career path.

BMC: Regarding the concept of the adjustable IOL, what are your thoughts now that it is closer to becoming a reality?

WILEY: Our practice was chosen to be a study site for the US FDA clinical trials for the RxLAL. The first time I implanted one and then adjusted it, I thought to myself, "This is something my dad and I talked about 20 years ago in our

kitchen.” To see that technology come to fruition was a great moment, and I was so excited to go home that evening and tell my father.

BMC: From the @clearchoicelaser Instagram, it looks like a fun and family-like culture. As medical director, how do you promote this environment?

WILEY: Clear Choice has a great culture, and it does have a family atmosphere. We have had nontraditional marketing since almost day 1. Two of the partners in Clear Choice are not physicians; they are marketers by trade, and they helped create that culture. Sometimes physicians have one way of looking at things that’s different from what a business or a marketing person may see.

Even our waiting room is different from what I might have designed as a physician. My partners did not want the space to look like the typical sterile, cold medical facility. They made it look like a local coffee shop with a warm vibe. We have a fireplace in the lobby. We make fresh cookies and serve fresh Starbucks coffee. It is a different atmosphere that was driven by the staff and the team.

One day my business partner said, “We should get an ice cream truck.” I was like, “Why would we want an ice cream truck?” He said, “Well, who doesn’t like ice cream?” And I said, “Okay, but how will this benefit our patients, how will it help to get our name out?” We ended up buying not one but two vintage 1950s ice cream trucks, and we offer access to them for any of our past or present patients. They can reserve a truck for a kid’s birthday party or special event. We offer it as a free service, and we take donations that go to a local low-vision center.

The benefit to the practice is that, when the truck shows up at the birthday party, all of the parents say, “How did you get this ice cream truck?” Then, they say, “Clear Choice—We’re patients. It’s a great place to have LASIK or refractive surgery.” This helps get our name out there in a nontraditional way.

Listening to a partner with a nontraditional marketing idea and taking your

“Listening to a partner with a nontraditional marketing idea and taking your ego out of the way can lead to interesting developments.”

ego out of the way can lead to interesting developments. Letting somebody else run with an idea to create a better atmosphere was initially hard for me to do, but I can see that has paid off and has produced a great culture to work in.

BMC: Outside of ophthalmology, what keeps you fulfilled?

WILEY: I enjoy skiing in the winter. Living in Cleveland, winters can be rough, with subfreezing temperatures. My family made a decision to make skiing our family hobby, and that’s one outlet I’ve enjoyed over the past few years. Almost every weekend in the winter, we drive to Western New York and ski as a family. We’re in the car together, on the mountain together. It’s a great family atmosphere.

I also enjoy doing triathlons. I have always liked running and biking but never thought I could ever swim a mile or more. To be able to do a half Ironman or multiple triathlons and work through that weakness in the swimming section was rewarding.

BMC: You’re a Dave Matthews Band fan. When and why did you start following them?

WILEY: I went to the University of Virginia, where Dave Matthews got started, at a bar called Trax. He would play every Tuesday night with a \$5 cover charge. Even when he first started, he drew a crowd. I was in a fraternity, and we had an annual fall festival. We had a band every year, and it was usually a cover band, but somebody suggested Dave Matthews. We found out he would charge \$500 to play, whereas the cover band was \$800. Looking back, it’s wild to think I saw Dave Matthews play in front of 40 people at a fraternity party.

BMC: If you had to nominate one creative mind in ophthalmology, whom would it be and why?

WILEY: Any member of the Vanguard Ophthalmology Society (www.vanguardeye.org), a group that was started in 2009 by like-minded physicians. For example, Malik Y. Kahook, MD, has innovated a number of products, most recently the Harmoni IOL, which was bought by Alcon. John P. Berdahl, MD, started Equinox, which is looking into the role of intracranial pressure in glaucoma. (Editor’s Note: *The Chief Medical Editors of MillennialEYE have selected Drs. Kahook and Berdahl as its creative minds. For those interviews, see pgs 29 and 33, respectively.*) Gary Wörtz, MD, has the Omega lens (Omega Ophthalmics), which is a new upgradable IOL that is interesting. Damien F. Goldberg, MD, has the company Ocular Science, developing topical formulations for postoperative care, and Rob Sambursky, MD, started RPS Diagnostics.

Those are just a few members of Vanguard who have great ideas. Some members may not have invented anything yet, but the society has a collegial atmosphere of bouncing ideas off each other. Over the past 10 years, it’s been great to see such a concentration of creative minds come together and help change or shape the field. ■

Editor’s Note: This is an abridged version of Dr. Wiley’s interview. To read the entire interview, log onto www.glaucomatoday.com/issues/ and click on the May/June issue.

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