

5 Questions With Alice R. McPherson, MD

The depth and breadth of the accomplishments of Alice R. McPherson, MD, are striking. She was one of the first fellows of Charles L. Schepens, MD, and the first woman vitreoretinal fellow. Dr. McPherson was the first full-time female retina specialist in the world. She mastered scleral buckling when it was the only treatment for retinal detachment and became one of the top surgeons in retina. She pioneered and promoted several procedures that are now accepted as basic elements in the treatment of retinal disease. Dr. McPherson was a founding charter member of the Retina Society and, later, served as its president. She has received numerous awards and honors, including the most prestigious, the Gonin Medal. Her formidable leadership and philanthropy have greatly benefitted individuals and organizations throughout the world. Dr. McPherson built a large, incredibly successful practice in Houston, with thousands of patients, and has trained more than 100 fellows since she began practicing.

I feel fortunate to have been one of Dr. McPherson's fellows. She taught me many lessons, both in the office and in the OR. Perhaps the most important lesson was her perseverance. "Never give up," she would say. And, "Always do your best for your patients."

—R. Ross Lakhanpal, MD

1960 Founded the Retina Service at Baylor College of Medicine

1969 Founded the Retina Research Foundation

1997 Received Honorary Doctor of Science Degree from University of Wisconsin-Madison

2002 McPherson Eye Research Institute established

2014 Received the Gonin Medal

2015 Received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Why did you choose a career in ophthalmology?

While on ophthalmology rotation during medical school, I found myself impressed by the importance of vision to our general well-being.

How does it feel to have been the first full-time female vitreoretinal specialist?

I had no special feeling about being the first. In fact, I never looked at the specialty as a competition between men and women. It's all about working together, sharing ideas, educating and inspiring others—men and women alike—to join our mission to save and prolong eyesight.

How has the field of retina changed since you first entered the profession?

To me, technology has been the most notable change, and the technology involved in molecular genetics, electrophysiology, and optical imaging have enhanced retina research on a monumental scale.

What is your greatest professional and/or personal achievement?

My greatest achievement, both from a personal and a professional standpoint, is



Dr. McPherson with former fellow R. Ross Lakhanpal, MD.

establishing the Retina Research Foundation. It is also a great source of pride knowing the great strides in patient care that have been and will be accomplished thanks to basic science research.

What traits do clinicians need to possess in order to be successful ophthalmologists?

Ophthalmologists are no different from any other medical specialists. To be successful, they should: practice good clinical care, have a solid education, and always be up to date on the latest research. ■