



FIVE QUESTIONS WITH... RICHARD S. KAISER, MD

Richard S. Kaiser, MD, is a Professor of Ophthalmology at the Sidney Kimmel Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University, an Associate Surgeon at Wills Eye Hospital, and Co-Director of the Wills Eye Hospital retina fellowship program, all in Philadelphia, Pa.



1 What are the traits an individual needs to be a successful retina specialist?

Richard S. Kaiser, MD: Diligence, empathy, calmness, and a sense of humor are all baseline traits that I look for when selecting fellows—each seems to correlate with prosperous and fruitful careers in retina.

Additionally, it's important to have both a limited short-term memory and an excellent long-term memory. Not everything in our field is going to go the way you want; thus, a limited short-term memory helps you move past difficult cases. At the same time, you need an exquisite long-term memory. It's crucial to learn from your failures. A key distinguishing feature between a good doctor and a mediocre doctor is allowing the same mishap to occur twice.

2 You have been a principal investigator or co-investigator on several clinical trials. What aspect of clinical trial work most piques your interest?

Dr. Kaiser: I have enjoyed being part of the clinical trial process, but I get more satisfaction out of conducting my own research projects.

3 Which individuals have influenced you most in your ophthalmology career?

Dr. Kaiser: I'm a believer in what Isaac Newton said: "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." This line has been used a thousand times in a thousand speeches, but it's true. I'm eternally grateful to the mentors that I've had through the years—from my residency with Alexander J. "Sandy" Brucker, MD, and Stuart L. Fine, MD, to my fellowship with George A. Williams, MD, Michael Trese, MD, Antonio Capone Jr, MD, and the rest of the team at William Beaumont Hospital. I'm also grateful to my partners at Wills Eye because I'm constantly learning from them; their excellence pushes me.



4 Tell us about your most memorable surgical experience.

Dr. Kaiser: I think my most memorable experiences in the OR have been watching my fellows succeed. There's nothing more satisfying than teaching retina surgery and seeing a fellow's skills grow. My greatest satisfactions have come from looking through the assistant scope.

5 If you were a superhero, what would your superpower be, and why?

Dr. Kaiser: The ability to read minds and to truly understand what people are thinking. An alternative is being able to fly; my office commutes would be much easier! ■

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