

For Plantation’s medical director, timing was everything

Kendall Donaldson, M.D., M.S.

As a fellow at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Kendall Donaldson, M.D., M.S., was encouraged by then chairman Carmen A. Puliafito to round out her medical education with management courses. Donaldson decided to heed his advice, completing a graduate certificate program at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

It was a fortuitous decision. Just months after completing her fellowship in 2004, Donaldson was named medical director of Bascom Palmer Eye Institute at Plantation.

“It was a perfect opportunity. Three months after completing my fellowship, the center opened,” she recalls. “I was involved from the start, even participating in the center’s design.”

“The Plantation center is a microcosm of our facility in Miami,” says Donaldson. “We have five faculty members who specialize in retina diseases and disorders, an oculoplastics specialist, a general ophthalmologist, two glaucoma specialists, a contact lens specialist and a low vision specialist.” Donaldson, herself, specializes in corneal and external diseases and performs cataract and refractive surgery.

Donaldson’s interest in ophthalmology grew from her need to wear prescription eyeglasses at an early age. Initially reluctant to wear the thick glasses her condition required, Donaldson’s parents encouraged her to learn about the eye, even helping her to build a model of the eye for her third grade science fair project.

“As a small child with thick glasses, the eye doctor was the only doctor I really had exposure to,” she says. When she was in medical school, an uncle developed choroidal melanoma (primary cancer of the eye) and Donaldson’s interest in ophthalmology deepened.

Donaldson received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Maryland at Baltimore, and her medical degree from the University of Maryland School of Medicine. She completed her residency in ophthalmology and her fellowship training in corneal and external diseases at Bascom Palmer.

Today, in addition to her role as medical director of the Plantation satellite, Donaldson is associate professor of clinical ophthalmology. She specializes in new advances in cataract surgery and laser vision correction. Typically, she operates one day a week at Bascom Palmer’s flagship center in Miami performing LASIK procedures. She enjoys the satisfaction that comes with treating cornea patients. “Cornea patients tend to have the best vision outcome. They generally have problems that can be fixed,” she says, adding that with cataract surgery, “there is tangible improvement; you can see better right away.”

Donaldson’s research is focused on advances in cataract and refractive surgery and the treatment of childhood ocular rosacea. Traditionally thought of as affecting only adults, the inflammatory eye condition, which can cause scarring, pain and blurred vision, is occurring with greater frequency in very young children.

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— Kendall Donaldson, M.D., M.S.



Last year, Donaldson and Bascom Palmer colleague Carol L. Karp, M.D., associate professor of clinical ophthalmology, published the results of a study in which they followed 20 children with ocular inflammation consistent with ocular rosacea. According to Donaldson, the majority of patients responded very well to treatment with erythromycin and/or low-dose steroid preparations. The main point of the study, she says, was to increase awareness among community ophthalmologists about the condition and how to treat it.

Most recently, Donaldson's research has focused on improving and expediting the healing process for Epi-LASIK patients. Epi-LASIK is a laser eye surgery that treats the surface of the eye, but does not involve cutting a flap in the cornea as does LASIK. Though less invasive than LASIK, recovery from an Epi-LASIK procedure takes about five to seven days, as compared to the morning after for a LASIK procedure. "Anti-inflammatory drugs", she says, "appear to help the healing process for Epi-LASIK patients."

Over the years, new laser vision correction techniques, including Intralase and Wavefront Guided Custom Excimer laser treatment, have improved laser vision correction. The key, Donaldson says, is not only identifying the right candidate for the right surgery, but also starting with an eye that is healthy in all aspects. "Ninety-five percent of success with vision correction surgery is identifying who is a good candidate for the surgery."

Donaldson believes that in the coming years the field will be moving away from laser vision correction procedures toward intraocular implants. Already Bascom Palmer physicians are working with three presbyopic lens implants—Crystalens, Rezoom and Restor, that focus for both distance and near vision.

"Some patients have described choosing a premium lens implant as one of the best decisions they have ever made," says Donaldson, careful to point out that the lenses are not right for everyone. Over time she believes they will continue to improve. "There are great things on the horizon in the field of vision correction."

Outside of Bascom Palmer, Donaldson is focused on her family, including her husband, Dr. Scott Anagnoste, who also is an ophthalmologist, and their two young children. With what little free time she has, Donaldson enjoys playing the piano. In fact, the family just acquired its first baby grand.

Donaldson is grateful for the opportunities that have come as a result of her association with Bascom Palmer. "Getting accepted to the residency program at Bascom Palmer has been my proudest professional moment," she says. "It has opened so many doors for me."

So, too, is she proud of the success of the Plantation satellite.

"Not only do our patients love coming to our Plantation center, but I have been so lucky to work with such a great group of people. In just four years, our office staff has grown from six to twenty-one. We're a great team and I really enjoy working with every one of them."