

Greatest reward is bringing about life-changing results for children

Wendy W. Lee, M.D., M.S.

Professor Wendy W. Lee, M.D., M.S., applies her interest in art to her professional passion – oculoplastic surgery.

“Oculoplastic surgery is a field built on characteristics that appeal to me: creativity, intellectual challenge, variety, and the ability for continued knowledge and growth in medicine,” she says. This particular sub-specialty has allowed Lee to combine her love of medicine and surgery with her interest in art. This interest has proven beneficial in all aspects of oculoplastic surgery, but it has particularly served her well in the area of aesthetic surgery, a niche of oculoplastic surgery that she became increasingly involved with. Her keen eye for aesthetics and spatial imagination has its roots in childhood. “While applying for college, I was undecided between the arts and sciences. With oculoplastic surgery, I am able to achieve both,” says Lee.

Today Lee is a specialist in ophthalmic plastic and reconstructive surgery at the institute. She treats an extraordinarily broad spectrum of oculoplastic disorders, including the diagnosis and treatment of skin cancers of the eyelids, trauma involving the eyelids and orbit, eyelid malpositions, tearing disorders, and orbital tumors, infection and inflammation. In addition, Lee provides the full range of services offered in the institute’s new aesthetic center, including surgery to correct drooping upper eyelids; *blepharoplasty*, which is surgery to remove excess skin in the eyelids; brow and forehead lifts; and non-surgical cosmetic enhancements including Botox® treatments, dermal fillers and photorejuvenation, which is a form of pulse light treatment that may minimize the appearance of age spots, vessels and sun damage and eliminate unwanted hairs. Lee also performs laser skin resurfacing, a technique to rejuvenate the face, neck and hands by reducing the appearance of fine wrinkles, sunspots, and acne scars. Lee is also

trained and certified to perform the Contour Thread technique, a self-anchoring thread technology that uses barbed sutures to lift the brows, midface, jowls and neck in a minimally invasive way.

She is spearheading the Bascom Palmer aesthetic center’s expansion effort by teaming up with the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine’s cosmetic dermatology service located at the Miami Heart Institute in Miami Beach. The intent is to forge a multi-specialty aesthetic alliance to better serve patients in the South Beach area. She sees patients at Bascom Palmer’s offices in Miami, Plantation and Palm Beach Gardens, and is available for oculoplastic consultations in the Miami Beach office twice a month.

In addition to her clinical practice, Lee is devising novel techniques to reconstruct eyelids and is continually searching for successful ways to replace eyelid tissue and at the same time restore function, anatomy and aesthetics in the case of large cancer resections or severe trauma. In trying to solve clinical problems in which effective therapies remain elusive, Lee is involved in a number of scientific investigations, including a study of orbital tumor markers. Identifying and characterizing tumor markers will provide a better understanding of the biological behavior of a tumor, and hopefully play a role in designing targeted therapy for some of the lethal eyelid and orbital cancers. She is engaged in a study to develop permanent dermal fillers that are designed to be injected underneath the skin to efface wrinkles and folds.

Recently, Lee and colleagues drew national attention when they teamed up with the university’s oral maxillofacial surgeons to treat two children from Haiti. Both children had very large facial tumors involving the eye area and orbit. “These

challenging facial reconstructive cases have been most rewarding for me," Lee says. "The surgeries, which are still ongoing for one of the children, have addressed significant functional, psychological and vision-threatening problems. Additionally, the surgeries have addressed cosmetic issues that in the past produced unfortunate outcomes for these young patients in their villages."

This case is a perfect illustration of merging the artistic creativity of oculoplastic surgery with the latest surgical techniques. "It is very gratifying to see the functional and cosmetic outcomes for these young patients," comments Lee. "Furthermore," she adds, "I have the two best possible mentors in oculoplastic surgery that I could have ever hoped for. Dr. Tse and Dr. Johnson welcomed me into the oculoplastics family with open arms and I am most fortunate to be with them at Bascom Palmer. I couldn't be happier and every day I look forward to the intellectual discussions with my colleagues."

Born and raised in northern California with four siblings and two very supportive, loving parents, Lee earned her medical degree from Tulane University School of Medicine. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in biological science from the University of California at Santa Barbara, and a master of science degree in physiology from Georgetown University. She completed both her residency and internship at her medical school alma mater, and a fellowship in ophthalmic plastic, orbital surgery and oncology at the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute.

When she is not seeing patients, Lee is able to balance a demanding clinical load with her stable home life in South Miami. She and her husband, Michael, an assistant professor at the University of Miami's obstetrics and gynecology department, whom she met on the first day she arrived at Tulane, have two young sons, ages two and four. "At the end of every day I look forward to going home to see them," she says. "They are the love and joy of my life."



Experience and training set Bascom Palmer's oculoplastic surgeons apart. "We focus on and are very familiar with the anatomy of and around the eye."