

## Disseminating knowledge to practicing ophthalmologists motivates accomplished surgeon to continually be on cutting edge

# Sonia H. Yoo, M.D.

Sonia H. Yoo, M.D., assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, had always planned on being a surgeon. And, when she crossed paths with an attending ophthalmologist during medical school, she knew she had found her chosen field of study.

“He really enjoyed what he was doing,” Yoo recalls. “He influenced me to look into ophthalmology as a career choice.” Yoo, who enjoys working with her hands and using microscopes, found the field offered her the opportunity to do both. “Ophthalmology was a natural choice.”

Today, she is a surgeon in corneal and refractive surgery at Bascom Palmer. She has an active clinical practice and extensive experience in performing LASIK and other refractive surgeries. She has investigated technology using lasers to remove cataracts and is involved in numerous studies aimed at improving the outcomes of patients undergoing cataract and refractive surgery. In addition, she serves as the cornea fellowship director at Bascom Palmer.

Yoo joined Bascom Palmer in 2000, another natural choice. “Bascom Palmer is the best eye institute in the country; its reputation speaks for itself,” she says. “It is in a part of the country that is beautiful and in need of ophthalmologists to provide corneal care.”

Currently Yoo spends about two days each week performing surgery, two days seeing patients in clinic and the rest of her time doing research. Her commitment to the field of ophthalmology, however, reaches well beyond her activities at Bascom Palmer. She is a board member of the Cornea Clinical Committee and the Program Planning Committee of the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery; examiner for the American Board of Ophthalmology, reviewer for the journals, *Archives of Ophthalmology*, *Ophthalmology*, and *Cornea* and serves on the editorial board of the journal *Ophthalmic Surgery, Lasers and Imaging*.

“I consider it service to my profession to be involved in committees and organizations outside of what we do at Bascom Palmer,” Yoo says. In addition to her committee and organizational involvements, she includes writing among her professional activities. She has published numerous papers and book chapters about refractive surgery and corneal diseases and is associate editor of the textbook, *Intraocular Lenses in Cataract and Refractive Surgery*.

“Writing is a very effective and efficient way to disseminate knowledge,” says Yoo. “One of my missions is to be a teacher and writing is part of that.” She calls her students at the institute “very motivated and bright,” adding, “We are very fortunate at Bascom Palmer because we get the best of the best. I am continuously amazed by their achievements even before they get here.”

Yoo says that along with improvements in refractive surgery has come a greater expectation on the part of patients. “LASIK has had such good outcomes. Technology has allowed us to get to a point where the vast majority of patients are free of glasses and contacts for most things. New patients expect that they will be the same.”

Patient expectations are increasing in other areas as well. Yoo says that she is slowly beginning to see that trend of greater expectations among her cataract patients as well. “Now with more lens choices, we are able to get closer to the goal.” She cites, for example, new intraocular lens designs that allow surgeons to correct for near-sightedness and far-sightedness with a single implant, and accommodating lenses that move



inside the eye to focus from far to near. The lenses, she says, have moved surgery to a very advanced state and will continue to become more customized to accommodate patient lifestyles and activities.

Much of Yoo's work is an extension of the work she began at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary of Harvard Medical School where she was a full-time faculty surgeon and previously completed her residency training and a clinical fellowship in cornea, external disease and refractive surgery.

"I am constantly learning new things; there are so many advances in the field," says Yoo, who lives in Pinecrest with two sons, ages six and nine, and her husband. "We are in a subspecialty that is highly technology driven and in this new age of technology, new and better things are coming up at an exponentially increasing rate."

Yoo is currently researching a new method of removing cataracts; studying how lens design affects biological responses in the eye; the use of lasers to remove corneal scarring; and new intraocular lenses that are customized for each patient. "Many technologies are on the horizon that will bring cataract surgery to the next level."