



Up Close

with JUSTIN SCHWEITZER, OD, FAAO

At what stage in your life did you know that you wanted to become an optometrist?

I knew entering college that I had an interest in optometry. I had spent a lot of time with my hometown optometrist because I was very near-sighted. My vision underwent changes throughout my childhood, and I always was appreciative of the way he treated me. I then spent some time with him during college to try to understand the profession better. Observing how he cared for people and seeing the variety of ocular diseases he encountered had a major influence on my wanting to become an optometrist.

What's one of your favorite things about working in a multidisciplinary practice setting?

Each day has a lot of variety and many challenges in caring for patients with ocular disease. I love this because I learn so much each day. Working with an ophthalmologist and other optometrists allows me to provide the best care possible to my patients. We are constantly bouncing ideas off one another with regard to treatment options, and bringing different perspectives to the table, which I believe leads to excellent and uncompromising patient care.

You are known for your glaucoma expertise. What initially attracted you to the disease, and what keeps your interest in specializing in it?

At Vance Thompson Vision I have had the opportunity to manage a variety of ocular diseases, ranging from glaucoma to anterior segment pathology, cataract, and corneal refractive issues. Each has its own unique challenges, and I feel satisfaction as a doctor when I am able to help each

patient. My main role is to help manage the clinic patients who have glaucoma, anterior segment pathology, and cataracts, and those interested in corneal refractive surgery. This role has enabled me to manage a lot of glaucoma, both medically and surgically.

When I started at Vance Thompson Vision, minimally invasive glaucoma surgery was just entering the market, and it piqued my interest in the disease. I continue to have a passion for diagnosing, managing, and learning about the disease. With new medications, diagnostic equipment, and surgical options continuing to come to market, it is an exciting time to be involved in glaucoma.

You are a Co-Chief Medical Editor for this publication. How have you enjoyed this role, and what do you hope to communicate to readers through the content offered within its pages?

This position has been amazing and at times challenging, but it is no doubt one of the highlights of my career thus far. The connections and relationships that I have made with colleagues in this role are priceless. We are truly making an impression on our profession, and that wouldn't be possible without the collaboration of MOD's editorial board, Leslie O'Dell, OD, FAAO, Walter Whitley OD, MBA, FAAO, all of the contributing authors, and the rest of the MOD team who work so hard to bring everything to print and keep us all on task.

My hope for the year 2020 is that we can build on our 2019 goals of providing our readers with pertinent and interesting clinical information they can use in their practices to build upon the medical model, which is so important in our profession.

What evolving techniques or technologies could be the most transformative for the profession?

I am currently trying to educate myself on artificial intelligence (AI) so that I have an understanding of its capabilities, its potential, and its drawbacks. Humans can analyze and make decisions better than any other species in the world, but we are limited in how much information we can process and how quickly we can process it. AI will likely have applications assisting optometrists with making efficient, accurate diagnoses, helping with decisions on best therapeutic options for a variety of ocular diseases, and analyzing large amounts of data quickly to help with surgical outcomes for a variety of procedures for our patients.

During your well-earned downtime, what are your favorite pastimes to partake in with your family?

We love to be outdoors as much as possible. As soon as the weather cooperates in the spring, we spend most of our weekends camping (more like *glamping*) and at a lake, which allows my whole family to disconnect from the internet, TV, etc., and just spend time together. In the fall we try to spend time at my wife's childhood farm hunting and being with family. I also have a passion for competition, so part of the summer includes trips to compete in triathlons. The goal is to pick destinations that the whole family can enjoy once I am done with the suffering. ■

JUSTIN SCHWEITZER, OD, FAAO

- Optometrist, Vance Thompson Vision, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- Chief Medical Editor, *Modern Optometry*
- justin.schweitzer@vancethompsonvision
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