



Dr. McGee and her daughters Emery (left) and Evey (right) at the Global Ophthalmic Women meeting in the Canary Islands.

Up Close

with SELINA R. MCGEE, OD, FAAO

What drew you to optometry?

I wanted to be in health care from a young age because I love helping people. I became myopic at the age of 10, and I remember what it felt like to see clearly for the first time. I had the opportunity to work with two ODs at the age of 19, and it solidified what an amazing profession optometry is. I sped toward my degree and never looked back.

What is the most interesting or unique case you have encountered thus far in your career?

One stand-out is an 11-year-old with a history of headaches and blurry vision. He had papilledema, so I got him to the ER, scanned, and did all the work-up, expecting the worst. Thankfully, he had pseudotumor cerebri, which is unusual for his age and gender. It's been 21 years, and I still see him and his mom every year, no matter where they live. He refuses to see anyone else.

You are a female small business owner who provides full scope optometric services. Were there any particular challenges you faced when building your practice?

I think it's super important to have trusted advisors, such as my accountant, my attorneys, my bank, and my financial planner. These all really need to be solid relationships. Also, don't be afraid of owning a business; it's much more flexible than working for someone else. I have two daughters and am married, so the freedom I have from owning my practice is great. It's a lot of work, but it gives me more freedom to do all the things that I want to pursue. Don't feel like you have to do it all. Instead, surround yourself with people who you

can outsource what needs aren't your strengths (or are not the best use of your time). You have to be adaptable, and resiliency is a skill that you can absolutely strengthen.

Why is it important to you to provide full scope care to patients?

I think of my practice as standing on multiple pillars, such as primary care, specialty contact lenses, dry eye, aesthetics, and a high-end optical. Basically, the services we provide haven't been commoditized yet, which is intentional. You can get an eye exam anywhere, but the experience that we provide to our patients cannot be purchased anywhere else. It's important to have many pillars so that when the market shifts or changes, the practice doesn't fall. I also want to see the profession itself grow and evolve. Patients and the population need us to do that. I hope to always add value and leave things and people better than I found them. It's one of my core values, and that's why I'm so heavily involved in optometry.

Why did you decide to offer aesthetic services to patients?

When I kept seeing my patients with dry eye sabotaging my best efforts—and their own—to manage their condition. We have devices that can help people look and see their very best. It's such an incredible opportunity to strengthen my relationships with my patients and provide them even more value, all while leveraging my knowledge of how the eye and the periocular adnexa work in conjunction with each other. No one knows more about these two things than ODs.

How do you stay current with the latest advances and developments?

I seek them out inside and outside our field. There are subject matter experts everywhere we turn. We can look to conferences, journals, podcasts, colleagues' lectures, articles, and more. The key is having a growth-oriented mindset and making space for it.

What advice would you give to someone considering a career in optometry?

I love this profession. It offers so much diversity and depth to what you can do. I would encourage someone to spend time in an OD's office and, if they can, in multiple offices. This way, they can really see the day-to-day in different settings.

What are your hobbies and interests outside of work?

I love to read (like a book or two a week). I'm also a Master Gardener, a Level 2 Sommelier, and I used to be a really good photographer. I also like to paint with light. All of these activities feed my love of nature and growing things. In-depth conversations with my daughters and husband are my non-negotiables every night (when I'm home and not on the road). You'll find all four of us in bed doing the Wordle, the mini crossword, the Waffle game, and reading together. ■

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