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BIRTHDAY  
April 29



YEARS IN  
PRACTICE  
19

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#### FAVORITE QUOTE

If you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal, not to people or things.

— Albert Einstein



#### CURRENT AFFILIATIONS AND POSITIONS

- Assistant Professor, Medipol University, Istanbul, Turkey



#### PREVIOUS AFFILIATIONS AND POSITIONS

- Director of Refractive Surgery, Istanbul Eye Hospital, Turkey
- Consultant Cataract and Refractive Surgeon, World Eye Hospital, Istanbul, Turkey
- Medical Director and Consultant Cataract and Refractive Surgeon, Kudret Eye Hospital, Istanbul, Turkey

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

### Currently, what book are you reading, what TV series are you binge-watching, what app do you use the most, and where do you get your daily news?

**Book:** I am interested in philosophy, especially the philosophy of Rumi, the 13th century Persian poet and Sufi mystic. His work relieves me of my worries and teaches me about life.

**TV series:** I do not normally follow television series, but recently I found out about *Genius*, a series chronicling the life of Albert Einstein, and I am finding it very interesting. I prefer to watch movies, especially comedies.

**App:** Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

**Daily news:** Lately, watching political news has been upsetting. It depletes my motivation, so I have decided not to follow political news very closely. However, because I want to stay informed, I listen to the news while having my breakfast and putting on my makeup in the mornings. Starting my day this way is a ritual of mine.

### What is something in your life you would happily do again, and what is something you would never do again?

**Happily do again:** I went to Thailand, mainly for two reasons. First, I wanted to get to know the Buddhist culture more closely, and second, I wanted to go on an elephant safari. I went on several elephant safaris on this trip. Riding an elephant on the far side of the world was relaxing. I discovered a lot about myself, and it helped me to remember that there is a world different from the one I get sucked into daily. I would like to experience this again, and I believe I will.

**Never do again:** I do not want to mention the country or the airline, but I would never go back to one of the African countries I have been to—I had never been so scared in my life. Maybe it was my bad luck, but I have been to this country twice, and my experience was similar both times. Systems were disorganized, no one spoke English, everything went slowly at the airport, and, although I arrived 3 hours prior to my flight, I had to wait for a long time at the check-in counter. Furthermore, I had to buy a new ticket because they could not find the ticket I had purchased on their system. I got worried because if I had missed the plane I would have had to spend 2 more days there. I would never go back to that country.

### What are three places at the top of your bucket list?

- No. 1: Norway, for whale watching.
- No. 2: Africa, for an elephant safari.
- No. 3: Australia, to take photographs.

### If you had to donate half your income tomorrow, to whom would you give it?

I would give it to a smart, hardworking, critical-thinking student to allow him or her to visit a person working in a career he or she dreamed of having one day.

### If there is one high-risk thing that you have not done but remain curious about, what is it?

Riding a motorcycle to work every day.

# YOUR THOUGHTS ON OPHTHALMOLOGY

## **What is the health care landscape like in your country?**

In Turkey, there is competition between hospital chains and private clinics, especially in ophthalmology. Refractive surgery is performed more often in private hospitals than in university hospitals here.

## **How enthusiastic are you about the future of ophthalmology?**

I think there is a lot of growth potential for surgical technologies and screening systems in ophthalmology.

## **What products in the pipeline excite you the most?**

Corneal imaging equipment now allows us to take detailed measurements. In the future, the information we will have regarding the dimensions and characteristics of each layer of the cornea will be even more detailed.

## **What was your most memorable moment in surgery?**

In my early years of LASIK surgery, I was performing an operation on a lawyer. A free flap occurred, and I barely managed to find the flap, which had become stuck in the microkeratome. At that moment, I thought about leaving everything and running away without looking back.

## **What recent studies or technologies have influenced your surgical technique?**

Undoubtedly the introduction of femtosecond laser technology in LASIK and cataract surgery has influenced my surgical techniques.

## **What was the toughest decision you have had to make as an ophthalmologist?**

Early in my career, I worked in the same private hospital for approximately 10 years. I had many patients there, I was happy with the staff, and I eventually became the medical director and chief. Toward the end of my time there, I realized that things had become too much of a routine, and there was no potential for professional growth. I made the decision to change from that hospital to another, but it was not an easy decision.

## **How has ophthalmology changed since you started practicing?**

Since I started in ophthalmology, femtosecond laser technology has revolutionized both LASIK and cataract surgery.

## **What advice can you offer the new generation of ophthalmologists?**

I recommend that young ophthalmologists keep imagining and pursuing their dreams. They should follow whatever makes them excited. After acquiring the necessary knowledge on each subject, they should choose a specific field in which to improve themselves. They should be brave with their career plans, and they should not hesitate to ask questions.

## **If you could trade lives with a fellow ophthalmologist for 1 day, who would it be and why?**

I would trade lives with Geoffrey C. Tabin, MD, for a day. I admire the Himalayan Cataract Project, of which he was the cofounder. Dr. Tabin is a humanitarian hero. I would love to emulate him and perform cataract surgeries in different places of the world.

## **If you were forced to limit your practice of ophthalmology to one procedure, what procedure would you choose and why?**

I would choose keratoplasty. Thanks to keratoplasty surgery, many patients who were unable to see can now see the world. The procedure itself is fun to perform, and there is still so much to explore. In my opinion, LASIK and standard cataract surgery (not including complicated cataract cases) are not as exciting as corneal surgery.

# YOUR THOUGHTS ON BUSINESS

## What differentiates your practice from those of your competitors?

Being a woman and having a woman's perspective to share is one difference, considering that most of my colleagues are men. Other than that, academic studies are an inseparable part of my life, and I aim to incorporate those into my care of my patients. I do not think these things make me or my practice any better than my colleagues, I see them only as differences.

## How do you feel about private equity, and is there a place for it in ophthalmology?

Private equity has an important place in ophthalmology, especially in refractive surgery. The instruments we work with are high-technology devices that are, unfortunately, difficult for government hospitals to purchase.

## How do you approach marketing your practice and specific procedures you offer?

Unfortunately, marketing is necessary in refractive surgery, but as a surgeon I am not happy about that. I believe patient satisfaction is the most efficient marketing tool.

## How do you or your practice keep staff members happy?

Staff satisfaction is correlated with salary, of course, but I believe that educating and valuing staff members are factors that are as important as salary. It is important to work with the right people to start with; it is a waste to spend time teaching people who do not love what they do. Informing staff members about patients, explaining surgical instruments in a detailed way, discussing results, assigning responsibilities, holding staff meetings, and listening to their problems are all steps that can have a positive effect on staff members' overall satisfaction.

## What is your end game?

I want to support young, enthusiastic ophthalmologists and share my knowledge with them. I feel that it is somewhat meaningless when a surgeon does not share his or her experience for the benefit of others. ■

