



Kristina Mikek, MD
kmikek@morelaokulisti.si



BIRTHDAY
February 2



YEARS IN PRACTICE
14



FAVORITE QUOTE

Live life to the fullest, enjoy what you do, and always keep a positive attitude. It is a beautiful thing when a career and a passion come together.



CURRENT AFFILIATIONS AND POSITIONS

- Director, Morela Okulisti, Center for Eye Refractive Surgery, Ljubljana, Slovenia

PREVIOUS AFFILIATIONS AND POSITIONS

- Consultant in Ophthalmology, University Eye Clinic Ljubljana, Slovenia

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 like reading books about life in general and about people who have worked hard for something and have succeeded. The last book I read was *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, by Haruki Murakami.

TV series: I do not have time to watch any TV series. I prefer to spend my free time with my family. We like to cook, for instance, and simply spend evenings together.

App: Instagram, where I follow the beautiful moments of my friends from all over the world.

Daily news: I catch the news on the radio while driving or sometimes in the operating room, and I almost never watch the evening news.

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

Happily do again: I never regretted my choice of studying medicine; I would do it all over again.

Never do again: It is impossible for me to say that I would never do something again. I prefer to see difficult situations as a step in learning and in personal growth.

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

This is a hard one. I have visited many wonderful places with my family and have created many unforgettable memories. Still, after every trip abroad, I realize I mostly love coming back home. If I had to choose:

No. 1: Corsica.

No. 2: Key West, Florida.

No. 3: Charming Paris.

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

One part would be dedicated to all the missionaries around the world and to people who help those in need. Another part would be invested into technology, to discovering something new.

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

My curiosity reaches out to the universe. If I could, I would love to explore other planets.

YOUR THOUGHTS ON OPHTHALMOLOGY

What is the health care landscape like in your country?

Health treatments in Slovenia are covered through social security and insurance; however, the treatments are constrained by long waiting periods. Another option for treatment is private health care institutions, where all services, from diagnostics to conservative or surgical treatments, are self-paid by patients and can be obtained almost immediately. However, we can see that private insurance policies are changing, and some of them are already beginning to cover certain treatments and surgeries in private institutions.

How enthusiastic are you about the future of ophthalmology?

I constantly follow all new developments in ophthalmology and use certified guidelines and proven methods and techniques. I believe this is the key to success. I am excited about new methods of treating keratoconus with CXL, and I am convinced that there will be even more options in the future to help patients with keratoconus.

What products in the pipeline excite you the most?

Cataract surgery with the femtosecond laser and IOLs for the correction of presbyopia are the most exciting areas of innovation at present.

What was your most memorable moment in surgery?

Actually, there are three of them. The first one was my first time sewing the conjunctiva, which occurred at the University Eye Clinic Ljubljana, where I performed my residency. The second was conducting cataract surgery in Novo Mesto, Slovenia, under the surveillance of my mother, Vesna Morela, MD. The latest and most stressful and memorable case was the first LASIK surgery I performed with my colleague Vikentia Katsanevaki, MD, PhD, giving me a hand.

What recent studies or technologies have influenced your surgical technique?

My surgical techniques in laser and cataract surgery have been developed mainly through performing high numbers of surgeries and thereby gaining experience. Of course, I am indebted to the professional help of

my mother, who is also an ophthalmologist. In my early career, after every surgical day, I would call her to exchange experiences and to endlessly discuss different surgeries and techniques. We still talk often about ophthalmology.

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

Letting go of a secure job in a public institution and starting from scratch with my own private clinic, Morela Okulisti.

How has ophthalmology changed since you started practicing?

The technology of diagnostics has undergone major development, making refractive surgery now much more predictable and accurate, with much fewer complications. Advanced surgical technology has also undergone great improvements in complexity and precision, which makes surgery even safer for our patients.

What advice can you offer the new generation of ophthalmologists?

If you love ophthalmology and surgery, the advice is simple: Practice dedication and persistence. This is the best job in the world.

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

I really love what I do, so I do not feel like trading lives with anyone.

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

Some years ago, I would definitely have chosen laser refractive surgery, but now I would go for cataract and IOL surgery. Technologies for both the surgery and the lenses are advancing rapidly, opening many new possibilities.



YOUR THOUGHTS ON BUSINESS

What differentiates your practice from those of your competitors?

I dedicate myself to the patients. Everyone at our clinic strives to be attentive and caring to the people who come to our institution; our patients are not just numbers. We keep up with new developments, and, once their efficacy and safety are verified, we try to bring them into our clinical practice. We were, for example, the first ophthalmic practice in Slovenia to start treating keratoconus with CXL, and we have since acquired more than 10 years of experience with the technique. I am proud of that.

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

Ophthalmology is an area in medicine in which, at least in Slovenia, development is rapid. I do not have many comments about private equity firms purchasing practices, but I do advocate that private clinics invest in new technologies and the expertise of their doctors, which enables patients to obtain the highest level of service. For example, 1 year ago, I had no reason to think that I would ever perform laser-assisted cataract surgery, and today I have 6 months of experience. In the instance that a private equity firm does buy a practice, it is important for that firm to understand that building a good ophthalmic

practice is not easy. It depends mostly on the staff, their attitude and treatment of patients, and on the organization and workflow. Just buying a practice is not enough.

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

All marketing activities at our clinic are conducted by highly professional individuals, so I do not have to deal with this because I fully trust their competencies.

How do you or your practice keep staff members happy?

With positive energy and a positive attitude. I find it important for employees to know that a good result is important and that it depends on everyone involved in the work process. I also believe it is important to reward the good work and dedication of every employee.

What is your end game?

I want to create a team of highly qualified ophthalmologists, optometrists, nurses, and administrative staff who will enjoy working at our center, Morela Okulisti. ■

