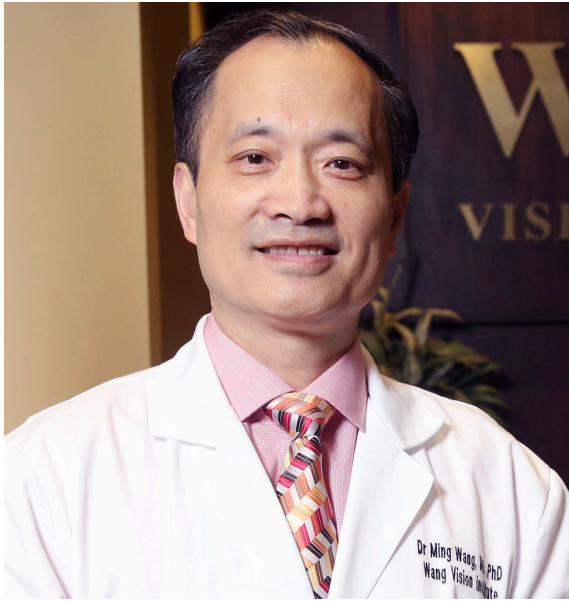


AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. WANG



Dr. Wang is a renowned eye surgeon at the Wang Vision Center in Nashville, TN

Dr. Wang embodies the immigrant success story. His childhood was one of tumult due to China's Cultural Revolution that threatened to send him away to labor camps. To avoid being sent away, Dr. Wang learned to play the *erhu* (Chinese violin) and to dance. Dr. Wang eventually came to America with fifty dollars and a goal to become a doctor like the generations of doctors in his family before him. He has become a doctor, and a very successful one at that.

By now, Dr. Wang has invented and holds U.S. patents for biotechnologies such as the amniotic contact lens. By now, Dr. Wang's Youtube channel boasts a video where Dr. Wang plays the *erhu* as Dolly Parton, a famous country singer, sings. Dolly Parton is one of many celebrity patients who have been treated at Dr. Wang's Nashville eye institute. By now, Dr. Wang's website holds a lengthy list of nonprofits that he is involved in, many that he founded himself. The Common Ground Network, Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration, Tennessee Immigrant and Minority Business Group... the list continues. By now, Dr. Wang has written an autobiography about his life's journey, "From Darkness to Sight: How One Man turned Hardship Into Healing", which inspired the movie "Sight", which came out this year in 2024. These accomplishments tell his immigrant success story, with more chapters being added by the day.



Dr. Wang and Dolly Parton, his patient and famous country singer

While his path to becoming a doctor was a decision Dr. Wang says was influenced by his parents, Dr. Wang credited a striking childhood occurrence for his desire to pursue ophthalmology. "A close friend of mine, whose father got a chemical injury when we were young, has to live with blindness for the rest of his life. I really learned the prospect, the suffering of people in darkness, and I feel that it would be so nice to be involved in a specialty which can bring light to people. After I got my PhD in laser physics, I decided to get my second doctorate degree, this time in medicine because I think if I can learn technology and medicine, I could be a unique laser eye surgeon."

Dr. Wang thought correctly. Today he is indeed a very unique laser eye surgeon, unique in his accomplishments, his clients, his philanthropy. Still, the thing he is most proud to have accomplished is his restoration of vision to blind orphaned children. "There is no more gratifying experience than working hard and to be there when someone comes out of darkness into the light. A few of us actually know someone living in darkness for years and decades come into light, but even fewer of us were there at that moment when that happened. So that moment, that joy, is worth all the hard work, the countless number of late nights working in the laboratory researching. To me, the most gratifying aspect is forming foundation non-profit work that helps the blind orphan children who have the greatest need but yet the least of voice to have a chance to come out of darkness and into light."

However, even a doctor as experienced as Dr. Wang is sometimes unable to restore the vision of those who need it. "Sight" depicts one such case of a blind orphaned girl named Kajal. Dr. Wang was unable to restore her vision, and the film shows how frustrating and discouraging this was. When asked about how Dr. Wang finds the strength to persevere through difficulties or hardships in his medical career, Dr. Wang mentioned the importance of accepting his best efforts as enough. "I think that how I can persevere and work hard despite difficulties is that I fundamentally changed the definition of happiness from whatever I am doing objectively, will it turn out or not, to subjectively — whatever I am doing, have I done my best? Now I don't really pay attention to the objective outcome, I pay attention to if I've done my best. The best way to persevere to overcome difficulty is to redefine your definition of happiness from objectively to subjectively. If you are able to change that, you will always be able to persevere through [hardships]."



*Film poster for the movie
'Sight', based on Dr.
Wang's life story*

With a lot on his schedule, how does Dr. Wang manage his time and balance between his medical career, non-profit work, and life outside of work? Dr. Wang mentioned it was more about finding passion than finding the time to do things. "We tend to think, 'Oh I don't have time for this, I don't have time to do this.' Guess what? If you want to do something, you may or may not be able to do that, but if you don't really want to do something, you will never be able to do that. So ask yourself the question, 'Do I really want to do that?' That's an even more important question than, 'Do I have the time to do that?'"

Dr. Wang's advice to younger people goes along the same lines of finding and pursuing passions. "Continue expanding your horizons now. Don't narrow down too quickly. Study as much English literature, all different things. Music, writing, architecture... When you're young, it is time to expand your horizons. And your life enjoyment is almost linearly proportional to how wide your life experience is."

As for how Dr. Wang wants to expand his horizons, and what to do next with his life, he wants his story, and other Chinese Americans' stories, to be heard. "I am continuing to expand my foundation to help blind orphaned children. That's been my life's passion. Also, I want to use the film as an opportunity to inspire all Chinese Americans in America. I think Sight gives us two suggestions. One is to do things outside our own comfort zone by contributing to American mainstream society's main problems, stepping out of the Chinese American circle. Do more things to help America itself. In America we have lots of problems, but one of the mainstream American problems is that some people cannot afford healthcare. That's why I have been involved in charity care to help those people who cannot afford [healthcare]. Second thing we should do is speak out. In Western society if we do not tell people, they will not know. I want to use this film as a long term project to inspire the first generation, and the second generation to stand up and tell our stories."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Grace Lee is a rising senior in Virginia. She enjoys reading, traveling, and hanging out with friends.

Dr. Wang's immigrant success story will continue, and he hopes other Chinese Americans will continue theirs and share theirs, as well.