On California, Connery, and coiffures.

AS INTERVIEWED BY AUDINA BERROCAL, MD

Who are you?
I’m an assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology and research assistant professor of biomedical engineering at the University of Southern California and a visiting associate in medical engineering at Caltech. I was born in Watford, England (yes, we are finally doing well in the Premier League!), and I moved to the Boston suburb of Concord when I was 8 years old.

What is your specialty within retina?
I’m codirector of the surgical retina fellowship at the USC Roski Eye Institute, and I also specialize in uveitis of all types, but mostly posterior disease. The other hat I wear concerns treatment of retinal and ocular disease using microtechnology. My work initially focused on parylene-based microelectrode array technologies, but I have branched out from there to work on a whole host of biomedical microdevices.

What do you see as the future of retina? How will you contribute to it?
I know from my engineering background that there are always better mousetraps, and I think the future rests in microtechnologies. I also spend time working on retinal prostheses, and I see the retina as an interface with the brain with the potential to truly reverse blindness.

How do you see surgical retina changing?
The biggest advances tend to occur when people think outside the box. For example, think of sutureless transconjunctival secondary intraocular lens implantation. For a decade or more, people had been locked into the idea that these lenses needed to be sutured in place using awkward, time-consuming techniques. It took a stroke of genius to ask, “Why not just use the lens in this way?” Now many of us have converted to this technique as a go-to procedure.

What motivates you?
Curiosity about the world and compassion for my patients keep me vested in what I am doing every minute of the day (and night!).

How do you spend your time outside work?
With my wife—an incredible woman, glaucoma surgeon, and public and international health expert—and at the beach. We surf, ski, and snowboard whenever we can find the time. We also specialize in teaching our genius 3-year-old rescue dog Pluto to do new yoga positions and tricks.

Can you have fun with your colleagues?
A little known fact is that the USC Roski Eye Institute is home to some world-class tennis players—from Mark Humayun, MD, PhD, to Andrew Moshfeghi, MD, MBA, to our techs—and we usually try to play a few times a month. They definitely keep me honest!

How would your friends describe you?
Kind, honest, humble, maybe smart, with a British (read: dry) sense of humor.

What would your patients say about you?
That I’m caring and always willing to give them the extra time they need.

How is it, practicing retina in California?
It is hard to compare, as this is the only place I’ve practiced, with the exception of my internship in Chicago. I think there is definitely something to be said for the California mentality that helps to diminish the importance of hierarchy and keep information and knowledge flowing fluidly.

Tell me something no one knows about you?
I can do a good Sean Connery.

What irritates you the most?
A bad automatic dishwasher.

What makes you happy?
The process of discovery. And stuffed animals, especially Care Bears.

What do you do to your hair so that it is always so perfectly coiffed?
Any spiking glue that comes in a yellow tube is my friend. Speaking of which, when is the VBS going to start giving out a Best Hair Award?

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