What I Sought and What I Found

BY DEBORAH KIM, MD

I looked for a glaucoma program that valued the fellow’s interest in learning. I wanted hands-on experience in all aspects of care—surgical and clinical. Because I think a major part of managing glaucoma occurs in the clinic, both pre- and postoperatively, I desired a program that emphasized both the OR and the office. I also wanted a program that would expose me to the newest glaucoma procedures (Trabectome [NeoMedix] and iStent Trabecular Micro-Bypass Stent [Glaukos]) as well as to tube shunts and trabeculectomy.

In the beginning, I focused on surgery, but I soon began to recognize the fine balance between managing patients with glaucoma medically and surgically. For example, particularly postoperatively, medical management can be crucial to the success of surgery. After my initial emphasis on surgical volume, I started to focus on finesse and fine-tuning my skills in the OR and in the office later in the year.

I sought a strong, fundamental grip on the basics of ophthalmology and ophthalmic surgery. Of course, a glaucoma fellowship tremendously improved my understanding and management of the disease’s complexity, but I also found that a well-rounded residency had instilled in me a level of confidence in taking care of patients that helped me tremendously. Many patients with complex glaucoma have ocular issues related to other causes. My ability to comfortably manage or triage those issues was important. In my residency program, I had executed a fair amount of glaucoma surgery, mostly involving the Baerveldt glaucoma implant (Abbott Medical Optics) and trabeculectomy. Fellowship was when I could learn the subtle nuances of glaucoma surgery.

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research exposure definitely enhanced my experience, as I got involved in clinical trials and research projects. Perhaps most interesting to me in this area was a study that examined an association between pigmentary glaucoma and nonsenile nuclear cataracts that was presented at this year’s annual meeting of the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery and is currently in the process of submission for publication.1

Upon completing my fellowship, I will join a multispecialty group just outside Los Angeles as the main glaucoma doctor in that practice.

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