

# Charles Kelman, MD

Regarded as one of the most influential physicians in the world, Dr. Kelman's talents go far beyond the operating room.



**What is the current focus of your research?** Presently, I am evaluating the Duet Lens, which not only passes through a small incision of approximately 1 mm, but it also has an optic that can be easily exchanged should there be a change in refraction, such as is the case with myopic children. Additionally, if the examination shows that the haptic is too large or too small, it can be changed while leaving the optic in place. I am also working on a cryoemulsification unit to remove small tumors from organs such as the lungs and liver.

**In what ways will ophthalmology evolve in the near future?** I think ophthalmology will progress primarily in the area of understanding corneal curvatures and aberrations, and that slow progress will be made in macular degeneration until a breakthrough discovery is made. The present attempts to develop an accommodation implant that has the capability of movement will be successful in certain cases, but it remains to be seen what percentage of patients will benefit from them. I see new surgical techniques evolving for certain forms of glaucoma, as well as improved ocular inserts for medication release. This advancement should help to overcome patient noncompliance.

**Do you feel that the lines between the cataract and refractive specialties are beginning to blur?** Cataract surgeons are becoming refractive surgeons who are correcting astigmatism as well as the cataract condition. Also, as refractive implants come into vogue, intraocular surgeons, such as cataract specialists, will best handle them.

**What has been the biggest surprise of your career?**

That would have to be the landslide acceptance of phaco after so many years of struggle. I can remember times when I would walk through the exhibit floor of various meetings and encounter outright hostility from many ophthalmologists. They just were not willing to believe that cataracts could be removed without cutting the eye halfway open. There were times when I thought the establishment was going to win out in banning my "radical, dangerous, small-incision approach."

**With extracurricular activities ranging from playing the saxophone on national television to writing an original musical, how do you balance work with personal time?**

I have learned how to be very efficient when working on a project, and generally I try to get it over and done with as soon as I can. Then I can delegate some of the small details and move on to other projects or personal interests, such as my family, music, performing, golf, helicopter flying, and traveling. ■

## FAST FACTS

- Pioneered the Kelman Phacoemulsification procedure in 1967
- Named Ophthalmologist of the Century by an ASCRS poll of over 20,000 ophthalmologists worldwide
- Shared the 1992 National Medal of Technology, given by President George Bush, with Bill Gates
- Has written an autobiography, *Through My Eyes*, and a musical, "The Right Pair of Shoes"
- Has appeared on television programs hosted by Johnny Carson, Barbara Walters, Merv Griffin, David Letterman, and Oprah Winfrey
- Former president of ASCRS
- Has performed in concert with Lionel Hampton, Dizzy Gillespie, The Spinners, Glen Campbell, James Darren, and Regis Philbin
- Awarded Doctor of Letters distinction by the Wills Eye Hospital Retina Service of Thomas Jefferson University, 2000

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