

# Take 5 with a US SMILE Surgeon

A conversation with Christopher L. Shelby, MD, a partner at WK Eye Institute in Shreveport, La.



Seeing beyond

**Q** Dr. Shelby, how did you first become involved with the ZEISS VisuMax laser and why?

**A** It started with a phone call from Abu Dhabi. While vacationing there in 2016, my partner Wyche T. Coleman, III, MD, happened to meet a cornea specialist from the Cleveland Clinic. He invited Dr. Coleman to their Abu Dhabi clinic to view a new refractive surgery technique that was not yet approved in the United States. After observing small incision lenticule extraction (SMILE®) and hearing about the outcomes their surgeons were achieving, Dr. Coleman called me and said, "Hey, man, we've got to get this laser!"

I'd read about SMILE, but because it was still pending FDA approval, it wasn't yet on my radar. Given our intention to acquire a VisuMax® laser, I investigated further. Based on what I learned and Dr. Coleman's enthusiasm, I concluded SMILE would be a wonderful addition to our refractive toolbox.

**Q** Why did you transition to the VisuMax laser to create your LASIK flaps?

**A** Initially, we intended to use our other femtosecond laser for any flaps we couldn't cut with the VisuMax. After six months, we realized there wasn't a flap that we couldn't cut with the VisuMax, and it was far superior to the other laser.

The VisuMax creates a gentle corneal suction versus the high amount of conjunctival scleral suction of our other laser, and the speed with which the VisuMax creates a flap is comparable to, if not faster than, that laser. We can create a flap of any size, and the flap thickness is incredibly accurate. In addition, the VisuMax uses a lower amount of energy, so the stromal bed is smooth and uniform, which, in my opinion, enhances postoperative results. Overall, it's a gentler, more precise platform than the others we have used.

When we began to perform SMILE in 2017, it really was a game-changer. We were able to achieve much higher corrections on thinner corneas, thus expanding the pool of patients for whom LASIK might not have been an option.

**Q** Tell us about the patient experience and how that differs with the VisuMax laser?

**A** If patients feel discomfort at the outset of a procedure, it heightens their anxiety, and the rest of the procedure will be miserable for them. The gentle suction of the VisuMax helps reduce the patient's anxiety, which, in turn, reduces the surgeon's anxiety and makes everyone in the room happier. That's a huge advantage.

Another advantage of the VisuMax is that a microscope—a ZEISS microscope with phenomenal optics—is attached to the laser, so that we can complete the extraction of the lenticule or insertion of intracorneal ring (ICR) segments without needing to move the patient. This is efficient for us and more comfortable for the patient.

**Q** Speaking of intracorneal ring segments, you've been using the Incision for ICR software module within the VisuMax. What has that experience been like?

**A** The Incision for ICR software enables us to create precise channels for intracorneal ring segment implants to treat keratoconus. The incisions are accurate, fully customizable, and easy to open. Inserting an intracorneal ring segment is a smooth maneuver, with the perfect amount of resistance, so I know I'm in the correct plane.

With the Incision for ICR software module, it's a pleasure to perform this procedure. We've had excellent results. By the next day, patients feel good, their corneas are as clear as glass, and their vision has already improved. For our keratoconus patients, that's huge.

**Q** How does the SMILE software module make the VisuMax unique among femtosecond lasers?

**A** The VisuMax laser is incredibly versatile technology, and it's the only platform globally to offer the SMILE software module. With this technology, my partner and I have been able to expand the scope of our refractive surgery options. It's also been advantageous for our patients. Their visual rehabilitation is fast and comfortable.

The VisuMax is our go-to 100% femtosecond platform for LASIK and now ICR segment implants, as well. It is a valuable asset.



## About Dr. Christopher Shelby

Dr. Shelby is a Shreveport native and a graduate of Texas A&M University. He returned to Shreveport where he earned a medical degree from LSU School of Medicine in Shreveport, serving his internship and residency at the same institute. After establishing his practice at WK Pierremont Health Center, he opened WK Eye Institute in 2003 and has been performing laser vision correction surgery since 2004.

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