

Aisha Simjee, MD Ophthalmology



Aisha Simjee, M.D., served as President of the OCMA and sat on its Physicians of Excellence Selection Committee in 2005, the year of the list's inception. In 2008, her first year off the committee, she was eligible and selected for the honor list, appearing in the January 2009 Orange Coast Magazine.

Dr. Simjee's office walls are peppered with her awards. Among them are the "Pride in Profession" Award from the American Medical Association, "Values in Action" Award from St. Joseph Hospital, certificates of recognition from a California lieutenant governor, congressman and senator, and "Woman of Achievement" and "Women of Visions" awards for her extensive charity work.

A Fellow of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American College of Surgeons, Dr. Simjee is a clinical professor of Ophthalmology at UCI and has served on the medical staff at St. Joseph Hospital for 31 years.

Why did you become an ophthalmologist?
At the age of six I contracted Trachoma (the leading cause of preventable blindness in the world). There were no doctors to treat me, and I was given a daily washing of my eyes with breast milk we purchased. It worked! Years later in medical school I researched this and realized the breast milk was sterile fluid rich in protein. As a result I became the first girl in my tribe to make it through high school, to graduate college and become a doctor.

Tell us about your practice.

I have a very busy practice, seeing patients Monday through Saturday. Cataract surgery is the one I perform most often, and I am a trained cornea transplant surgeon. Because I speak five languages, I get patients from all over Southern California.

Where have your humanitarian efforts taken you?

I have been to 22 different third-world countries...with Project Orbis, a DC12 airplane equipped as a traveling hospital, I went to Thailand. I have operated from a prison in El Salvador, and helped set up an operating room where none existed in the Republic of Georgia. I was able to deliver two new YAG

lasers to Romanian and Bulgarian teaching hospitals. Six months after 9/11 I went to Afghanistan's Kabul Noor Eye Hospital. Following the 2005 tsunami I traveled to Sri Lanka. In 2006 I was on a medical mission to my native country, Burma. The most recent trips I have taken were to Columbia in 2007 with doctors from St. Joseph Hospital, CHOC, Cedars Sinai and other L.A. hospitals. My only failed trip was to Kenya in 2008. Due to political unrest I couldn't perform surgeries, but someday I will go there again. This May I'm going back to Afghanistan. It's a blessing to be here in America, in excellent health and able to help others.

What about your local community service?

I've worked with La Amistad de Jose Clinic for many years and I sit on the Foundation Board. I'm pleased that Roland Hoyt donated \$50,000 last year and the late Virginia Roney, donated \$295,000 to St. Joseph Hospital on December 31, 2008. I believe it is the first of several donations from her estate. They were both grateful cataract patients, and it shows that just being nice to your patients can further the hospital's charity work.



A PUBLICATION FROM THE ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL MEDICAL STAFF OFFICE

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