A MAN OF VISION

By Laura Hampton

As a physician, Dr. Arun Gulani's philosophy is simple. Treat patients as though they were family, share your knowledge with other physicians and be the best.

Sought after for his expertise in Lasik, cataract and advanced vision surgery techniques, Gulani sees patients from all over the world in his Jacksonville-based practice.

Known as the da Vinci of eye surgery, Dr. Gulani is listed in FORBES magazine among top ten Laser Eye surgeons in the nation (goldline research). Although he is recognized as a top doctor in the field, Gulani insists patients are attracted to his practice for more than high-end outcomes; he is passionate about personalized care and tailors treatment to meet the patient's needs.

Where some ophthalmologists perform two or three vision correction choices, Gulani performs more than 30 vision corrective techniques and combinations. Lasik itself is just one among 15 advanced laser vision surgeries in his extensive repertoire, developed over time to individualize technique and technology to each patient. "I believe tailoring techniques to patients is the wave of the future."

For Gulani, personalized care also includes a personal touch. On the patient's initial visit, he typically sits down on a sofa and talks to him or her for an hour before the examination, and after surgery he makes personal follow-up calls to the patient to see how they're doing. "To me this is the correct way of practicing medicine."

Teaching is another passion for Gulani. He invites eye surgeons to come to Jacksonville and observe his practice, encouraging those who study with him to raise the bar on vision correction. "20/20 vision is not perfection. We have to aim for 20/10 or better."

In addition to working with doctors in the U.S., Gulani has been invited to teach at international podiums throughout Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. Although he willingly shares the technical knowledge he has gained through education and experience, he is just as passionate about sharing his vision for the future of ophthalmology.

"I traveled 40,000 miles for my daughter to see the best LASIK surgeon in the world."
Dr. Gary Martin, Australia

"One day a patient will walk into a doctor's office and say, 'Doctor, I have 20/20 vision' and the doctor will reply, 'Maybe I can help you.'"

Gulani moved to Jacksonville 11 years ago to establish the Lasik and Corneal surgery department at the University of Florida. People ask every day why he's in Jacksonville and not in New York or California, "I tell them I ran out of gas," he says with a grin.

The truth is, he has grown to love it here. "Maybe in my lifetime I'm making this example that every young guy or girl doesn't feel limited by geography. Just be good in what you do, and the world will conspire to make you successful."

Gulani sees three types of patients who need vision correction surgery—those who have never had surgery for refractive errors—nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism—those who have previously had radial keratotomy (RK) or Lasik surgery, but their vision has become poor again and those who have had Lasik surgery but experienced a bad outcome.

Although Lasik, or laser eye surgery, has been widely used since the late 1990s to correct refractive errors, techniques are improving continuously. Because of new techniques and technologies, vision problems that were untreatable in the past can now be fixed, such as high-level astigmatism and reading glasses for people over the age of 40. "Technology moves very rapidly in ophthalmology."

Although advances in recent years have produced amazing results, Gulani sees a day in the not-so-distant future when a doctor doesn't even need to be in the same room with the patient to perform surgery.

Today, Gulani is working on software in Germany that will allow a physician to instruct eye surgeons in remote locations during surgical procedures using 3-D technology. Eventually, this equipment will be 4-D, which will allow Dr. Gulani in Jacksonville to perform the surgery in a remote location. "That's the future."

Although it sounds like something out of a science fiction movie, Gulani expects it to happen relatively quickly. The 4-D and robotic technology necessary to perform this type of remote surgery could be available in six to eight years.

Keeping up with the latest technology is one of the reason's Gulani is considered a maverick in his field. Another reason is his continuous efforts to improve surgical techniques. He has invented several surgical instruments to make Lasik and cataract surgeries more efficient.

Although he has already accomplished much in his 22 years of practicing ophthalmology, his proudest accomplishment to date has been watching his dream come to life—the dream of doing something for others and doing it at the highest level possible. He never expected his name to be associated with the standard in vision correction surgery, and although he's pleased with that, he does what he does because he's passionate about helping people see.

"My satisfaction is—I sit down with the patient. I talk. I smile. I have fun and I'm blessed."