

The Bochner Eye Institute: Past, Present, and Future

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Once a private home in the early 1900s, the historic building situated in Toronto's prestigious downtown on Prince Arthur features an elegant, renovated facade. But it's what is inside that is truly eye-catching; amid the opulent furnishings and tasteful decor is a high-tech laser and surgical centre housing the most advanced vision-correction equipment.

Toronto's Maxwell K. Bochner Eye Institute pays tribute to its namesake, one of Canada's most revered pioneer ophthalmologists, by promoting clinical excellence and providing convenient outpatient surgery and optimal levels of patient care. At the entrance of the Eye Institute's gracious old building you are greeted by a picture of Dr. Bochner. The high ceilings, stained glass windows, and oak staircases of the past remain, and modern furnishings and selected Impressionist reproductions have been added to the facility.

The Legend - Dr. M.K. Bochner

The Bochner Eye Institute was established and founded in 1929 by Dr. Maxwell Bochner. While Dr. Bochner was one of the earliest surgeons to specialize in diseases of the eye, he was also one of the nation's leading ophthalmologists until his death in 1968. When performing cataract surgery and diagnosing eye disorders, he was able to recognize symptoms of other serious disorders of the body by examining only the eyes. This capacity was truly revolutionary more than 50 years ago.

In 1929 Dr. Maxwell K. Bochner became the first trained ophthalmologist in Canada after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania's famed Will's Eye Hospital. In the past, the specialty included eyes, ear, nose, and throat, but Dr. Bochner devoted his entire career to ophthalmology alone. In 1936 he became the first Chief of Staff at the Mount Sinai Hospital - a position he held for 40 years. At the same time, he also became the founder of the Scarborough General Hospital under the Sisters of Misericorde; he was also its Chief of Staff. He was the first physician in Canada to hold the Chief of Staff position at 2 major hospitals at the same time.

His innovative thinking coupled with diligent yet gentle patient care is a legacy Dr. Bochner has passed on to the Institute's practitioners and patients. His acumen, which has been repeatedly demonstrated by pioneering techniques in vision correction and a continual investment in state of the art laser technology, is also why other physicians regularly come to the Bochner Eye Institute. In fact, they come not only to learn about new techniques and technologies, but sometimes to seek treatment for themselves.

Dr. Bochner's humility and humanity were hallmarks of a great man. He was an outstanding physician and ophthalmologist but, most of all, he was an unusual human being whose first concern was for people. Currently, two tangible expressions of the devotion and respect of his hospital colleagues are the Maxwell Kurt Bochner shelf in the Ophthalmology section of the Mount Sinai Hospital's Medical Library, and a portrait of Dr. Bochner that hangs in a place of honour in the lobbies of both the Mount Sinai Hospital and the Scarborough General Hospital.

Today, the Bochner Eye Institute houses numerous programs for preventative medicine, active treatment, and research and education. In order to maintain clinical excellence in light of today's continuing technological advances, the medical directors of the institute - Dr. Harold Stein, Dr. Albert Cheskes, and Dr. Raymond Stein - offer the latest in vision enhancement, including the newly introduced state-of-the-art Allegretto 400 KHz blue line and VISX S4 with iris registration lasers, which are used to correct nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism.

Dr. Harold Stein joins Dr. Bochner at the Bochner Eye Institute

Dr. Harold Stein is a graduate of the University of Toronto Medical School. After completing an internship at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, he received a fellowship to study ophthalmology and ophthalmic surgery at the prestigious Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Dr. Stein also received a Master of Science degree from the University of Minnesota, and a fellowship in the Royal College of Surgeons. Later he became qualified as a plastic surgeon after studying with world-renowned plastic surgeon Professor Pomfret Kilner in Oxford, England. In Toronto, he began practicing with Dr. Maxwell K. Bochner, working side by side with the Bochner Eye Institute's founder for over ten years. Dr. Stein was soon recognized by the medical community for expertise in cataract surgery, corneal transplants, contact lenses, and later, refractive surgery.

Over the years, he has been a major international force in contact lenses, having been one of the first to initiate and pioneer the soft aphakic contact lens in the days of intracapsular surgery. He was one of the first to introduce intraocular lenses in Canada, and they became state of the art in cataract surgery. Initially, he imported lenses from Russia and Holland until America took its lead role in implant manufacturing. Dr. Stein has served as the Chief of Ophthalmology for over 35 years at Scarborough General Hospital, Scarborough Ontario.

Dr. Stein is credited with developing the professional role and educational format of the Ophthalmic Assistant in Canada and the United States. Recognizing a need for ancillary personnel in ophthalmology, he developed an office ophthalmic assistant's role in the early 1960s. Later, working with Centennial College in Toronto, he began the world's first Ophthalmic Assistant's education program. He also co-wrote (as senior author) the first ophthalmic assistant's textbook, now in its eighth edition. This expanded the role of the ophthalmologist in the delivery of eye care and provided a new field of endeavor for young professionals in the eye care field.

Over the years, Dr. Harold Stein has been invited to speak about cataract, contact lenses, and laser eye surgery at medical meetings and conferences around the world. As a tribute to his professional status, "The Harold Stein Lecture" was created by three separate eye organizations in Canada and the United States.

Dr. Stein's commitments extend to developing countries where he has volunteered to perform delicate eye surgery in areas where blindness is rampant. In addition, he has donated his time to teach doctors and other medical professionals in several countries about improved treatments, techniques, and technology.

The Bochner Eye Institute and the role of some of its leading ophthalmologists will be explored in two subsequent publications of *Eye Care Review*.

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