

Mark J. Cohen, President of Lasik MD, Montreal

Laser-vision surgeon saw an opportunity

By LISA STEPHENS from The Globe and Mail of May 5, 2008



Mark J. Cohen

Mark Cohen co-founded Lasik MD in 2001 and has since built the company into the top provider of laser vision correction in Canada and the country's largest privately owned medical services firm.

The company has some 350 employees and has been named one of the 50 best managed businesses in Canada. With 19 clinics, Lasik MD performs about one of every three laser-vision procedures in this country.

As a practising surgeon, Dr. Cohen has performed more than 40,000 procedures himself and spends three days a week in the operating room of his Montreal clinic. He also teaches ophthalmology residents at the medical schools of Université de Montréal, Université de Sherbrooke and McGill University. He is one of only 14 certified C-Lasik instructors in North America.

His interest in ophthalmology and lasers was piqued before he applied to medical school at age 18. He had seen some laser-vision experiments on TV and was fascinated by the combination of optics and physics. "I already knew I wanted ophthalmology — you're able to do a lot for people, since a large majority of the conditions are treatable or curable," he says.

But starting his own practice in the uncertain business climate that followed the terrorist attacks of September, 2001, provided a steep learning curve.

He saw opportunities to standardize medical protocols in his field and gain the co-operation of other surgeons in group practices.

"We really got a bunch of doctors in a field where they'd been essentially independent, and got them to make a very cohesive, strong group. That's fairly unique in medicine because typically doctors have their own practice," he says.

"The sum of a group of talented individuals is greater than any individual working on their own," he continues. "We learn from each other and cover each other. I try to get as many as possible to become shareholders — and then they have a vested interest in the success of their clinic."

Dr. Cohen is single and "married to my work," he laughs. "But I live in Old Montreal, so the fun is easy to come by. The restaurants and night spots on Saint-Laurent Street are great."

Special to The Globe and Mail