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Ming Wang makes Middle Kingdom move

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Dr. Ming Wang has taken his ophthalmology expertise to China, where he's bought an ownership stake in the country's largest private eye hospital system and trained thousands of eye surgeons.

Wang, who emigrated from

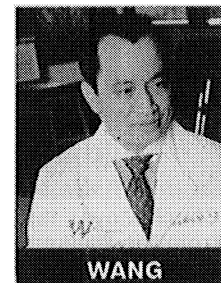
China 24 years ago, began taking a more active role in the 1.3 billion-person country after starting the Wang Vision Institute in 2002. He believed the rapid adoption of cellphones and automobiles would translate into potential for eye surgery locations.

"China's economic growth is unprecedented. Never before in

world history has there been such rapid economic growth with both speed and amplitude with such a big population," Wang says. "When I came to the U.S. years ago, 90 percent of the vehicles on the street were bicycles. When I went back in April, 90 percent of the vehicles were cars."

Wang took a stake and became

director of refractive surgery at Aier Eye Hospitals, China's largest private eye hospital system with nearly 20 hospitals in 15 cities and plans to add a few every year. The hospital system performed more than 250,000 LASIK procedures in the last few years.



WANG

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WANG: Hospital company eyeing IPO

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In 2005, Aier opened the Shanghai Aier Eye Hospital, a 100,000-square-foot facility with four new excimer lasers and China's first Intralase laser.

His firm, which hopes to go public on the New York Stock Exchange within the next two years, sees great potential in the Chinese LASIK market as the nation develops economically. The penetration in the \$5 billion U.S. market today is 5 percent versus just 0.1 percent in China. Considering the nation's size and rapid growth, Wang believes the market could be 200 times its current size within the next five years.

Wang's continued work in China underscores that country's role as an economic partner to Tennessee. The Volunteer state saw its exports to China surge from just \$157 million in 2000 to



more than \$1.4 billion last year. Most of the exports still center on crop production and chemical manufacturing products, data from TradeStats Express shows.

"China has become our sixth-biggest trading partner. It's huge," says John Butler, vice president of international business at the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Health care poses a large opportunity as American companies move into China. American Century Medical Group and U.S. Healthcare Management Enterprises have formed joint ventures with Chinese hospitals, according to information recently presented to a Nashville Health Care

Council event by Pacific Bridge Medical.

There are challenges to the eye business in China. The country has used its incoming cash to buy the latest medical equipment, but is still lagging in physician education. Doctors need training on surgical techniques, but also to immerse themselves in research and development of cutting-edge technology.

One measure of the gap between China and the developed world: Procedures Wang introduced to the Nashville market in 2002 are just now arriving in China.

Wang has taken on physician education as a role in the two months he spends each year in China. In his four years there, he has personally taught and certified more than 3,000 surgeons. Traveling the country and lecturing 15,000 ophthalmologists, Wang is having a hand in pulling China forward in health care capability.

"It is feasible for Chinese hospitals to catch up with the rest of the world and become world-class eye hospitals," Wang says.

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