

“Sunt frumoasa!” (“I’m so pretty!” in Romanian)

15-year-old Moldovan blind orphan Maria saw herself for the very first time!

She looked into the mirror... she stared at it and studied it intently...and all of sudden it dawned on her that the beautiful girl she saw looking back at her was actually herself! Maria squealed with delight and exclaimed, “Sunt frumoasa!” (“I’m so pretty!” in Romanian), as she was seeing herself for the very first time!

Amy Grant and Martina McBride invited Maria to a party, which was held in her honor to celebrate her amazing journey from darkness to sight. Maria, a 15-year-old (formerly) blind Moldovan orphan, was just one year away from being discharged from the orphanage (all orphans are only permitted to stay there until age 16). Lacking the skills needed to survive in the outside world, she would most likely have been forced into human trafficking and prostitution, a devastating fate that many Moldovan orphan girls had experienced. However, fate dealt her a much better hand! She is now living in a free country where she is loved by all, and she is filled with joy because she has gone from 15 years of darkness to sight... Maria CAN now see! Maria’s story is one of persistence, love and faithful prayer..... and God has finally answered her prayer!

Maria’s Story

It has been a little over a year since the doctors at the Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration first learned from Steve and Lynn Hendrich of a young, 15-year-old blind girl named Maria, who had been living in a special needs orphanage in Balti, Moldova. In the fall of 2012, Maria’s story became the inspiration and primary focus of the foundation’s annual fundraiser, the “EyeBall.” At this gala event, over 500 attendees heard Maria’s story and were touched by her photo, which was projected across the big screen. After that, many kindhearted citizens began a project to assist Maria in obtaining her visa so that she could come to America and be seen by the foundation to receive surgical treatments with the latest sight restoration technologies that could possibly allow her to see again!



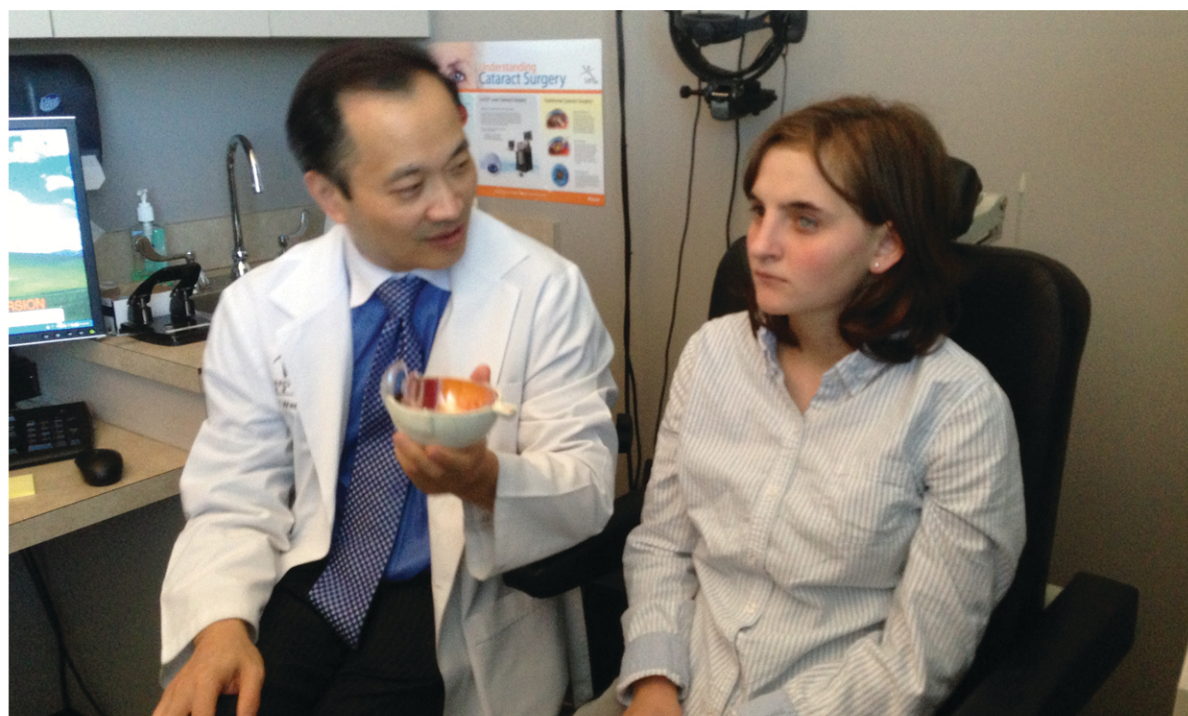
Maria, a 15-year-old blind orphan from Moldova, had been blind and had never seen herself.

Born prematurely, weighing only 2 pounds and having no access to proper medical care, Maria became malnourished and her physical development suffered significantly from neglect, which affected her vision most of all. Maria’s ocular history included an advanced, blinding cataract in her right eye, chronic inflammation of both eyes, a retinal detachment on her left eye (which had left her totally blind in that eye),

partial atrophy of both optic nerves. Even though Maria has been blind most of her life, she is kind and had befriended all of the children at the orphanage. They knew that if they were sad or needed something, they could come to Maria for help because she would smile joyfully and do her best to help them. But Maria wanted to be able to see. At age 15, when a teen is typically excited and looking forward to a lifetime of happiness and possibilities, Maria had been forced to live in darkness and misery, and had been told that she would have to remain there for the rest of her life.

The Road to Bring Maria to the U.S.

This is where the Wang Foundation came in. Established by Ming Wang, Harvard & MIT (MD, magna cum laude); PhD (laser physics), Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration (www.wangfoundation.com) is a 501(3) non-profit charity, which to date has helped patients from over 40 states in the U.S. and 55 countries worldwide, with all sight restoration surgeries performed free-of-charge. The foundation doctors



Maria travelled around the globe, to Dr. Ming Wang and Wang Foundation for sight restoration.



Maria had a complicated sight restoration surgery.

have published 7 textbooks and a paper in the world-renowned journal "Nature", they hold several U.S. patents for new biotechnologies to restore sight, and they performed the world's first laser-assisted artificial cornea implantation. Upon hearing Maria's life story, the doctors decided unanimously that Maria would be the foundation's next patient. However, the road to bring Maria to the U.S. to be seen by the foundation was a challenging one. Maria's biological mother had to be located, and then many attempts were made to convince her to allow Maria to travel to America to receive the necessary treatments. Dr. Wang himself wrote many letters to consulates and embassies asking for help in obtaining Maria's visa. Due to the combined efforts of many caring people, led by Steve and Lynn Hendrich, throughout the course of the past 12+ months, Maria finally received her visa and came to America.

Dr. Wang and His Team Evaluate Maria

Maria arrived at the Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration on the morning of Monday, October 21, 2013, where she underwent a full eye evaluation. Dr. Wang and his team discovered that Maria had lost 100% of her sight in the left eye (due to a retinal detachment), and 99% in the right eye (she could only see light). She had to be



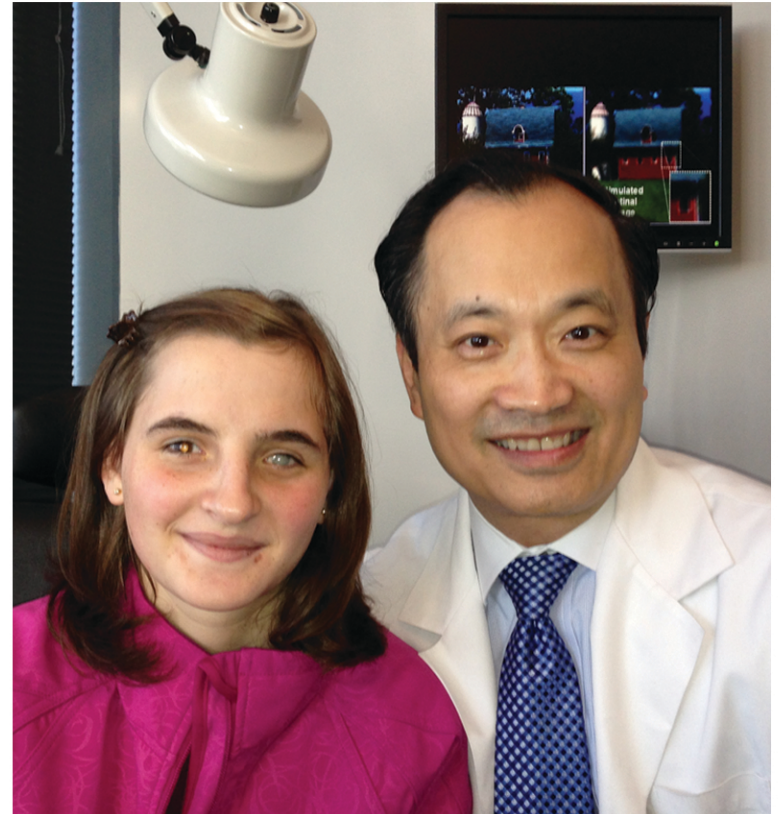
Maria now can see!

led around if she wanted to go anywhere. Dr. Wang planned a complicated and high-risk cataract surgery for Maria's right eye. The reason the procedure was so risky is that she had multiple eye diseases and issues, including a small, scarred and deformed pupil, tight adhesion of her iris to her lens, a dense cataract, uveitis, the unknown status of lens and zonular stability, and the possibility of retinal and optic nerve diseases. Therefore, Dr. Wang and his team had many barriers to overcome, each which could cause the surgery to fail entirely. If even one step along the way was not successful, the team would most likely not be able to continue to the next step. All the barriers had to be overcome successfully in order to have a chance to restore even a portion of Maria's sight. The odds of this entire process being successful were not good, i.e., similar to the odds of tossing a coin in the air several times and receiving "heads" on every toss, and if even one toss resulted in "tails," the game would be over! So in Maria's situation, all of the surgical steps ("tosses") had to be performed with the utmost precision ("heads") in order for the team to complete this complex and high risk surgery successfully.

So with such high risks at stake, why did Dr. Wang want to do this surgery? The reason is that if nothing was done soon, Maria would lose the 1% of sight that she had left in her right eye due its growing, end-stage cataract, and she would then be completely blind. So the foundation decided to meet this challenge, and they embarked upon a very difficult journey with Maria, praying throughout the process that God would step in and bless Maria with a successful surgical outcome, and bring her out of darkness and into sight!

Seeing Herself for the Very First Time!

The fateful surgery was performed on Thursday, November 7, 2013, and took over 3 hours to complete. Dr. Wang restored the distorted anatomy of Maria's iris and pupil, reconstructed the pupil, detached the iris and lens adhesion, removed the dense cataract, stabilized the anterior segment and implanted an intraocular lens. God guided the hands of Dr. Wang and his team, and they ended up being able to miraculously overcome each and every obstacle to complete the surgery successfully! When the patch was removed from Maria's right eye after surgery, she opened it and she could see!



A happy Maria (who now can see!) and Dr. Wang.

She counted fingers that were held several feet from her face, then she looked at everyone in the room... and smiled.

When Maria returned to the Hendrich's home, where she had been living for weeks but was now seeing for the first time, she marveled at the house and all its furniture. She lied down on the sofa, looked up and enjoyed counting the blades of the ceiling fan. That night, Maria went to the bathroom to get ready for bed. She looked into the mirror... she stared at it and studied it intently... Then all of sudden it dawned on her that the beautiful girl she saw looking back at her was actually herself! Maria squealed with delight and exclaimed, "Sunt frumoasa!" ("I'm so pretty!" in Romanian). She was seeing herself for the very first time! Maria has finally come out of darkness and into sight!

For information about the Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration:

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Please take a look at this amazing 30-second YouTube video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmEJWe_xTK8 and story on our website: http://www.wangvisioninstitute.com/story_maria.html