

# The First Assistant's Role in the Management of Complications During Phacoemulsification

**T**he methods of cataract removal have changed enormously over the past 10 years. Technology and techniques are advancing at a remarkable rate. However, no matter how skilled the surgeon, how advanced the technique, or how carefully planned the procedure, complications will occasionally occur. It is essential for a competent first assistant to be fully aware of the potential complications for each surgical procedure and to know what to do when these situations occur. Preparedness to deal with unplanned events that can occur during phacoemulsification, and the management of the complications, to ensure the smooth running of the surgical procedure will now be discussed.

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## Preoperative Preparedness

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Our ophthalmologist teaches us that there is no procedure in ophthalmic surgery requiring a more systematized approach than phacoemulsification. Performing phacoemulsification is much like playing chess: the surgeon must plan a strategy and be thinking one or two moves ahead. Each step is dependent upon the precise and accurate

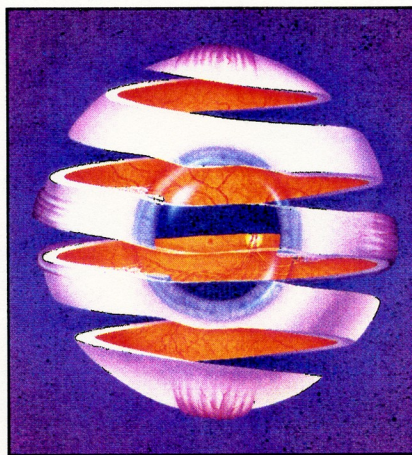


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completion of the step prior to it.

## The First Assistant

The first assistant must have already mastered the names and uses of all instruments and equipment, and will have practiced the eye/hand coordination necessary to work comfortably with the microscope or loupes. An experienced first assistant must have a positive attitude and total concentration on the procedure, the surgeon, the surgical strategy, and the surgical goals. When the surgeon and assistant are in harmony, elegance is added to the procedure. Like an orchestra conductor, the best surgeon in the world will not be able to produce the best surgical result without a coordinated team of players.

## The Patient

The preoperative evaluation will have reminded the surgeon of the surgical history of the patient's fellow eye, which might have included the occurrence of elevated postoperative intraocular pressure,

