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New Vision clears up cataracts – and more



Photos provided Dr. Tate looks into a patient's eye using a slit lamp.

By Siobhan Fitzpatrick Austin, The Newsweekly

A few years ago, Jackie McCorkle felt like there was a smudge on her glasses whenever she tried to read or drive. Things were blurry.

Frustrated, she went to New Vision Eye Center in Vero Beach and was told she had cataracts.

Like millions of other Americans, she opted for surgery to remove the eye's natural lens and insert a new one.

The doctor who treated McCorkle was Stephen M. Tate, and she can't thank him enough.

"My experience was awesome. I can't believe how poorly I was seeing before my cataract surgery. I have and will continue to recommend New Vision Eye Center to everyone," says McCorkle, a Vero Beach resident.

Surgery is daunting — so the doctors at New Vision always try to allay their patients' fears.

"We walk people through the process, one step at a time. And on surgery day, we administer IV sedation — if appropriate," says Dr. Tate. "Many of my patients sleep through the procedure, which helps alleviate a lot of the fear associated with cataract surgery."

Another option

Before a patient has cataract surgery, an appointment is made to take detailed measurements for the lens implant. The front and back of the cornea are also checked for regularity and to see if it is healthy enough to tolerate surgery.

Then the retina is imaged to ensure there is not any issue that may affect the surgical results. Finally, other tests and measurements are done in order to create a comprehensive surgical plan.

Astigmatism correction can be done at the same time as cataract surgery. And Dr. Tate and practice founder, Dr. Paul Minotty, at New Vision Eye Center have a secret weapon: the VERION Image Guided System.

New Vision is the only center in Indian River County to have this device, which adds more accuracy and precision to the astigmatism treatment process. The Verion system measures each eye's astigmatism and generates a map of the iris to guide a computer tracking system used in the operating room.

The system gives the doctors real-time tracking of the rotation and orientation of the eye as they operate.

Glaucoma, too

Glaucoma patients also have new options available to them at the time of cataract surgery.

"Over the last several years there has been a push to develop safer alternatives for the surgical treatment of glaucoma," says Tate.

"One of the newer devices that we offer for our glaucoma patients having cataract surgery is an intraocular micro-stent, which can help many patients decrease or eliminate their reliance on glaucoma drops."

Addressing a patient's glaucoma only adds a few more minutes to the cataract surgery and it's well worth it: untreated glaucoma can cause blindness.

But it is cataracts that remain the principal cause of blindness in the world, according to Prevent Blindness America (PBA).

Manifestations

The word "cataract" stems from the Greek word for "waterfall," because in ancient times, people believed that cataracts were like a flowing material, or waterfall, in the eye.

In more scientific terms, a cataract is a clouding of the eye's natural lens. The most common cause is age and often, one eye is worse than the other.

That was the case for New Vision patient Charles Webster.

"If I close my left eye, the blurriness goes away," he told Tate at a recent consultation.

But cataracts can manifest themselves in different ways. In some patients, they can appear as a bad glare that makes it difficult to drive at night.

Many people are not sure whether they have a cataract or other eye issues.

Check it out

So the first step is a visit with the doctor.

"Cataracts are easily diagnosed with a comprehensive eye exam," says Tate "Each person's eyes are different just as each person's visual needs are different. In addition to identifying cataracts as the problem, it is just as important to identify those needs and differences."

If cataracts aren't severe, Tate will try adjusting the patient's glasses prescription. But when glasses or contacts can no longer provide acceptable vision, he can perform surgery.

When that moment comes, the doctor draws a diagram for patients to show exactly what is going on with their eyes and what surgery would do to correct it.

His warm manner makes the entire experience for his patients a pleasant one.

And it just gets better, according to patient Jennifer Hawthorne.

"I can describe my cataract surgery in one word: miracle" she said. "I have worn glasses or contacts for severe nearsightedness since I was 7 years old, and for astigmatism in more recent years. I now enjoy 20/20 eyesight. I can even see up close (computer, food labels, phone contacts) without the constant need for reading glasses.

"Dr. Tate changed my life more than I could ever have imagined,"