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Read Our Electronic Edition Online Now!**BEACHSIDE NEWS MAY 2012****New Vision first to offer laser cataract surgery**

STORY BY MEG LAUGHLIN, (Week of May 24, 2012)

New Vision Eye Center in Vero Beach is the first and only ophthalmology practice on the east coast of Florida to offer laser cataract surgery.

To get a sense of what a big deal this is, consider this: Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in Miami, which is rated #1 in ophthalmology in the country by U.S. News and World Report, will begin offering the laser cataract surgery several months after New Vision.

The LenSx computerized laser imaging system makes a more precise incision than a surgeon, pre-softens the cataract so that less trauma is required to remove it and corrects astigmatism during the process.

“It’s truly revolutionary and amazing,” said New Vision ophthalmologist Stephen Tate, who, along with ophthalmologist Paul Minotty, will be one of two surgeons at New Vision performing cataract surgery with this technological advance, beginning June 1.

The LenSx laser was FDA approved in 2001 for LASIK surgery.

Because of the cutting precision it offers, it was recently approved for cataract surgery.

In 2009, Budapest ophthalmologist Zoltan Nagy delivered the findings of a study on it at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology in San Francisco. The study, which compared the precision of the laser for cataract surgery to that of a surgeon’s manual cut, found that only 10 percent of surgeon’s cuts achieved the accuracy level of the LenSx laser.

Manufactured by Alcon Laboratories in Fort Worth, Texas, the LenSx laser system was approved for commercial use for cataract surgery in early 2011.

“We’re thrilled to have this system,” said New Vision’s Minotty, “We’ll now be able to perform our patients’ surgeries with individualized specifications not attainable with other surgical methods.”

The laser system is about the size of a large copy machine. It has two computer screens – one viewed by a technician, the other by the surgeon who operates a lever to achieve accurate placement.

The patient lies under the laser, which looks like the slim, cylindrical tube on a small microscope.

Once the laser is perfectly positioned over the cornea, the cataract is softened. Next, high frequency sound waves gently break up the cloudy lens, which is suctioned out. The surgeon then inserts an intra-ocular lens to restore clear vision. The entire procedure takes only a few minutes.

About 20 million people in the US have cataracts. Every year, about three million of them have cataract surgery.

At New Vision, said Tate and Minotty, patients with cataracts can look forward to “improved visual outcomes that are even better than before.”

“It’s a really nice thing for us to see,” said Tate.