

# Ophthalmologist provides eye surgery

## Special multi-focal implants restore eyesight lost from cataracts

October 26, 2009

By Erienne Greene - Journal Staff Writer

RANSON - Those who describe their eyesight as like peering through a dirty window may be ideal candidates for a modern cataract surgery that is now available at Jefferson Memorial Hospital.

"I think it's important that Eastern Panhandle residents know about the new surgery done that is done with these new intraocular implants," said Dr. Gagan Singh, an ophthalmologist at JMHS who has been performing this special type of surgery for more than two years. "The surgery is available here, and people no longer have to travel outside our area for it."

The surgery involves replacing cataracts, which Singh said are blurry spots that develop on the eye lenses people are born with.

"Over time, they start to become cloudy as we get older. There are other things that may make them cloudy faster, like diabetes or an injury, but our genetics play a role with opacification, too," he said. "Most of us end up getting cataracts after the age of 55 or 60. It's not as common that one would get them at an age any earlier than that."

Singh said many of his patients cannot see clearly, and often say their sight is foggy.

"This happens very gradually, not just overnight. So usually over time, the patient adjusts to this type of vision because they don't realize their vision is declining. We usually tell them that with this issue, getting glasses (isn't) going to make a big difference, either."

Singh said the previous form of cataract surgery involved removing the cloudy lens and putting an acrylic or a silicone lens in.

Acrylic, by far, is the most common lens that is used, because it stays put in the eye for the rest of one's life, and it doesn't need to be taken out, he said.

It also is preferable for surgeons because they're more familiar with it - it was the first material as a cataract replacement to come out, and many doctors used solely acrylic in their studies.

These days, however, a newer implant, with the brand name Restore, is commonly used in cataract surgery - as acrylics lenses are - but Restore lenses offer recipients a few more options than basic lenses.

"This type of lens came up in the last few years. It's in a category called multi-focal intraocular lenses (IOLs), and it has more than one focal lens: one that's for distance and for near, and then one that is for intermediate," Singh said. "It's really helpful in this generation, because people of all ages are using their telephones, their computers, their iPods and other things that may not have been there 30 or 40 years ago."

Alan Linden, who now resides in Florida, had been a patient of Dr. Singh's for four years when he decided to undergo the surgery, which he had done in late May.

He said that while he could have stayed in Florida for the procedure, he preferred to have the surgery up here in the Panhandle.

"I had my right eye done first, because it was my really bad eye, losing significant vision. Then two weeks later, he did my left eye. My problem was that my night vision was very definitely affected," he said.

Linden said that now, his eyesight is very good, even though he still wears glasses from time to time, such as when he's reading for distance,

"I don't need them to work on a computer or watch TV, but they give me a little bit more clarity with the glasses," he said.

Linden said he would recommend this operation for any candidate considering it.

"The procedure was painless. There was anesthesia involved, but I didn't feel a thing even though I was awake during the surgery," he said. "I received very good care at Jefferson (Memorial Hospital)."

Singh said IOLs will keep getting better and better over time. He added that not everyone with poor eyesight is an ideal candidate for the surgery.

"People that have damage to the back of the eye's retina, even if the damage is just a little bit, these just won't work very well for them. They're not going to have the same benefit," he said. Currently, insurance does not cover costs of the IOL surgery.

"That's a huge deal with the number of patients on a limited budget. People need to realize it's not covered at this time, and costs can vary depending on various factors," he said. More information about this surgery is available by calling Singh at Jefferson Memorial Hospital at (304) 725-2121

Singh completed his residency at the University of Maryland in Baltimore, and then completed a one-year fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

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