

Cutting Edge Technology Provides Options for Eye Care Patients

By DONNA M. GIBERTI
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Eyesight is a precious gift that most of us take for granted. When vision is impaired, our quality of life is compromised. This often leads people to pursue corrective surgery.

Dr. Carl J. May, Jr., owner of May Eye Care and Associates Centers in Hanover and York, understands that cutting edge technology and an innovative approach to surgery provide his patients with the highest quality medical care available. For May, however, that's not enough. He has become a leader in corrective eye surgery and sets the standard for others in the field.

Spend some time with May and his staff, and you'll quickly discern that they're more than just co-workers. They're family and friends focused on a common cause: to educate their clientele and the community about new eye care techniques and options.

May drew inspiration for medicine from his father, a surgeon, and his mother, a nurse. During medical school at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, he chose to pursue vision-correction surgery as his specialty so that he could work with his hands. Through friendships he made with surgeons at nearby Wells Eye Hospital, he learned about the field of ophthalmology. He came to understand that by studying the eye, numerous systemic disorders such as diabetes, high blood pressure, tumors, and multiple sclerosis could be diagnosed and treated.

During his residency program at Nassau County Medical Center, Stony Brook University, Long Island, NY, May met a surgeon who was pursuing studies with the Excimer laser. Seizing the rare opportunity to observe new medical techniques while still in training, he was able to accelerate his learning curve. Ophthalmic use of the laser was not yet FDA approved, and only large universities had access to the equipment.

When May began to practice medicine ten years ago, the laser procedure had not yet been approved for public use.

However, when the FDA sanctioned use of the Excimer laser in 1995, May was already highly skilled in laser techniques and eager to bring the techniques to central Pennsylvania.

When asked if he felt like a medical pioneer, May said, "I think so, especially because of Laser In-Situ Keratomileusis (LASIK)."

During LASIK, the cornea of the eye is reshaped when a flap of corneal tissue is created and pulled back, permitting small amounts of cells to be vaporized. The entire procedure takes about 20 minutes and the patient remains pain free.

"A person can come here and receive the same high level of cataract or LASIK eye surgery that they could get at any top institution in the United States," explained May.

"This wouldn't have been possible without the help of Hanover Hospital and the Hanover Surgery Center."

"They have provided me with state-of-the-art cataract equipment that many places in the country don't have available to them." As he researches and studies new medical techniques and equipment, he partners with Hanover Hospital to bring new eye care services to the local community.

LASIK eye surgery at May's clinic draws clientele from the central Pennsylvania region, Maryland, and even upper New York State.

Office Manager, Stephanie Baumgardner, said that it's been exciting to watch the practice grow over the past nine years. She's pleased that May has brought a number of medical sub-specialists into the Hanover area and that patients, especially the elderly, now have specialists available locally.

A significant percentage of May's patients are over 50 years-old. Among other procedures, they are treated for cataracts, macular degeneration, and annual diabetic eye check-ups. Baumgardner feels the patients benefit by not having to travel long distances to find services in larger cities.

Transcriptionist Deb Rickrode said that as May's shadow while documenting every office visit and procedure, she's impressed with the time



Dr. May performs LASIK surgery at his laser center in York.

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that he takes with his clients. "He doesn't talk above the patients' heads. He really explains the procedures and wants people to understand what's happening."

"With easy access to the internet and more education, patients have a better idea about what's happening," said ophthalmic technician Tammy Rife who assists with office procedures. "Younger people arrive with a list of questions that they would like to have answered. We're always interested in educating patients," said Rife.

May Eye Care Centers currently serve patients in two locations. Eye examinations are performed in the Eichelberger Professional Building on Stock Street in Hanover. Cataract and LASIK examinations and surgery are performed at his office on White Street in York.

Dr. May's current project, development of the new Hillside Medical Center in Penn Township, will offer

state-of-the-art facilities that bring together numerous specialists in a common 80,000 square foot complex. With the "one stop shopping" theory as a model, comprehensive care that includes practitioners from a variety of medical disciplines will be available in one place. Hillside is tentatively scheduled to open in July 2003. When the complex is completed, May will move his office two miles to the new center.

An exciting result of the relocation is that LASIK surgery will be available in both Hanover and York. A suite, specially designed to accommodate laser surgeries, has been incorporated into the plan.

Another care component May is introducing is the VISX Star 4 Wave Print System. With the introduction of this system, local eye care will rival that offered in Philadelphia and at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, according to the physician. "This is another example of our leading-edge technology," he added.

The VISX Star 4 maps a fingerprint of the eye and provides a new level of diagnostic information that was previously unavailable. By measuring light waves as they travel through the eye, it reveals the way the entire optical system processes light.

Another innovation, 3D Active Trak allows the patient to relax during laser vision correction. In the past, patients were required to hold their eyes as still as possible during the procedure. The new technology follows almost imperceptible and involuntary movements of the eye and repositions the laser to ensure accuracy.

VISX technology also includes Variable Spot Scanning. May said, "This means the laser can change the size of the beam while I'm working. It provides a much better visual outcome."

LASIK, an eye surgery becoming increasingly familiar to many people, now requires minimal time, about 20 minutes. LASIK corrects distance vision. May said, "Once you pass 40 you might develop presbyopia, where you have trouble reading." It is a normal

aging process and results from a change in the protein composition of the lens, causing it to become harder and less flexible. When distance vision is corrected, a small number of people still need reading glasses. A modification called monovision counteracts presbyopia. The surgeon over-corrects one eye making it slightly nearsighted. The brain uses this eye for close-up detail vision and uses the fully corrected eye for distance.

Because automatic focusing takes place, it is unnoticeable.

Grateful that he has been able to offer new surgical techniques, including pioneering LASIK surgery in central Pennsylvania, May is negotiating to partner with two more surgeons. Currently, an optometrist works part-time at the May Care Center.

In addition to his busy office and surgical practice, May has authored a book on corrective eye surgery, published myriad professional articles, given numerous presentations and led seminars for various medical groups. He is currently writing a book about eye surgery technological breakthroughs.

One of his greatest satisfactions is training other physicians to do this specialized work. He is hoping to incorporate a program for resident training at his Hanover clinic in the future.

LASIK coordinator Corinna Hansford notes that May is an outstanding educator. "When I'm initially working with patients, I try to get them into meet Dr. May. Eyes are a special thing, and he's super at what he does."

Receptionist Maria Lawrence concurs with Hansford. "He's constantly researching information. As soon as he gets anything, it immediately comes to us." Stressing commitment to developing a well-trained staff, Lawrence said of May, if he sees something new, he educates all of us.

Contributing to the community that has given him so much, May provides seminars for local optometrists, educating them about care of their patients' eye diseases,

employee SPOTLIGHT



Name: Corinna Hansford

Job Description: LASIK Coordinator

Years With Company: 2 years

Accomplishments:

Corinna came to May Eye Care at a time of expansion when our number of LASIK patients was increasing rapidly. She learned as much as she could as quickly as she could and became a real asset to the office. She continues to increase her knowledge and is now a fully trained LASIK technician.

Why is this employee a good representation of your company?

Corinna is extremely friendly and is able to put patients at ease. She has an excellent knowledge base and is always willing to help patients in person or over the phone. She is very dedicated and has a good attitude with co-workers, other professionals, and patients.



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The May Eye Care Center staff. Back row - Deb Rickrode, Stephanie Baumgardner, Lori Bathurst, Maria Lawrence. Front row - Tammy Rife, Trina Downey, Ruth Stouter, Corinna Hansford.

new technology, and procedures. He speaks at local nursing homes about the aging eye, cataracts, and surgery options. May and his staff participate in a number of local health expos and conferences.

Rickrode expressed excitement about the team's community involvement. "A lot of diabetic patients don't realize that they must have their eyes checked." She continued, "They don't realize that if it gets really bad, they could lose their vision. But this is treatable."

May is grateful to his wife Sue for helping him to expand services in the community. As well as taking care of family life, she assists in business aspects of the practice.

May said that he loves his work because of the level of patient satisfaction that results from his surgeries. "You do LASIK and somebody never has to wear glasses again, or there was someone who had cataracts and was legally blind - now they can see again. Some patients cry, some hug and kiss you; they're the happiest people."

"It gives you a good feeling that you were able to help somebody. It's really gratifying."

For more information on the May Eye Care Clinic, or to schedule an appointment, call (717) 637-1919 or log on to www.mayeyecare.com.