Cornea Research Foundation of America
9002 N. Meridian Street, Ste. 212 • Indianapolis, IN 46260
317.844.5610 • www.cornea.org

March 2010

Playing the Hand They Were Dealt
Couple has corneal transplants on same day

Freddie and Myrna Gershon live in a great American city - New York - a place where "firsts" are common. After all, new plays often make their debut on Broadway, the city's famous harbor was the first port of entry for many of the country's earliest immigrants, and New York was even named the first capital of the newly formed United States in 1788 under the Constitutional Convention. Freddie and Myrna have been married for 38 years and during that time have achieved their own share of "firsts", but having corneal transplant surgery together on the same day was not a "first" they had ever imagined.

Auto Accident Causes Traumatic Change

Their story begins with Myrna who lost the vision in her right eye as the result of a terrible auto accident 18 years ago. The injury was described as having a "traumatic concussive effect" on her face. The orbit holding her right eye in its socket had been so damaged that a silicone orbital implant was applied as a replacement. Gradually, over the years, the trauma caused an accelerated deterioration of the endothelial cells, leaving her with 20/200 vision. She became legally blind.

Meanwhile, her husband Freddie was diagnosed with Fuchs' Dystrophy, a corneal condition that eventually requires a cornea transplant. He was being treated by his doctors in New York, a city noted for its top ranking medical institutions. By 2007, the condition had steadily progressed and painful blisters had formed on his right eye. The head of two hospitals' corneal department highly recommended that DSEK, a new corneal transplant procedure, be performed, not in New York, but in Indianapolis by a well known ophthalmologist, Dr. Francis Price, Jr. Freddie was told that Dr. Price had helped pioneer the procedure and performed more of them than anyone else in the U.S. "His doctor told me, "If I were having it done myself, this is who I would go to."

Freddie had the DSEK procedure in 2007, spending a week in Indianapolis before returning to New York, where he was seen by his doctors there for follow-up. He knew eventually that he would need to attend to his left eye.

Two Stories Are Joined Into One

In late 2009, Freddie's doctors in New York recommended that he have a transplant in his left eye. As they considered the timing of their plans, the couple decided they wanted Myrna to be evaluated, as well, to see if anything could be done to improve her vision. They returned to Indianapolis to receive Dr. Price's dual evaluation and surgical recommendations.

He told Freddie about a new procedure, called DMEK that he recommended in which the single defective cell layer is removed and replaced with a single healthy cell layer from a donor cornea, bringing about a fast visual recovery. To their delight, Dr. Price recommended a DSEK corneal transplant procedure on Myrna's damaged right eye, and the removal of some scar tissue and a cataract that had formed.

The couple agreed to the procedures and on January 6, 2010 received the transplants. "By one week after surgery, both had 20/40 vision without glasses and at 6 weeks Freddie had 20/20 and Myrna had 20/30 best corrected vision. Needless to say, having surgery on the same day, recuperating together, making their post-surgical exams and being seen by a group of visiting doctors studying with Dr. Price, has only served to create another unique bond between the pair."

Advice to Readers

The Gershons have lived their lives with a proactive philosophy and their advice to others facing vision challenges reflects this powerful proactive stance. Speaking for them both, Freddie describes it this way, "Take care of your eyes; don't be discouraged when you face a challenge – instead, get multiple opinions. Then play the hand you have been dealt – it’s up to you to take action."

C
Cornea Research Foundation of America
9002 N. Meridian Street, Ste. 212 • Indianapolis, IN 46260
317.844.5610 • www.cornea.org

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Indianapolis, IN
Permit No. 5677

Ask Your Doctor
By Dr. Francis Price, Jr.

Q. I have seen advertisements for multi-focal lenses which can give you both near and far vision - normal vision - after cataract surgery. How do I know if these are good for me?

A. Cataract surgery has improved dramatically over the last twenty years. If someone’s eyes are normal, except for cataracts, most people can end up with uncorrected vision (without glasses) of 20/20 to 20/30. That is so much better than just a few years ago. Now we even have the option to use lens implants at the time of cataract surgery which can allow you to see both far away and up-close in the same eye. These new lenses are called multi-focal, or accommodative, lenses, that help you to see both near and far vision - normal vision - after cataract surgery.

The lenses can have side effects on some people such as glare/halos or a reduced likelihood of restoring reading vision. The only way to know if these lenses are an option for you is to have an eye exam which looks for any of the problems which could compromise the benefit of the lenses. If your eye is healthy, then these lenses can be an option for your cataract surgery, and we can discuss the pros and cons of the lenses for your individual situation. Many patients are very happy with the lenses, but it is important to make sure that you are an appropriate candidate. The lenses also carry an added cost not covered by insurance or Medicare and usually add about $2,000 "out of pocket" expenses to the surgery per eye.

Cataract surgery is healthy, then these lenses can be an option for your cataract surgery, and we can discuss the pros and cons of the lenses for your individual situation. Many patients are very happy with the lenses, but it is important to make sure that you are an appropriate candidate. The lenses also carry an added cost not covered by insurance or Medicare and usually add about $2,000 "out of pocket" expenses to the surgery per eye.
CORNEA RESEARCH FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

Welcome to America
Brazilian doctor with us for a year

Frederico ("Fred") Guerra, M.D. was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and raised in Niteroi, a small suburban city located near Rio. His father is an internal medicine physician and his mother, a pediatrician; he has one sibling - an older sister - who is an engineer. Inspired by his parent’s careers, Dr. Guerra decided early in life to pursue medicine, and gradually focused his interests in ophthalmology, drawn to it for its precision and the often immediate results that patients experience. He enjoys having a career in which he can help change people’s lives for the better.

In his free time, Dr. Guerra enjoys swimming and bicycling; he is looking forward to warmer weather and being able to get outdoors for the sports he enjoys. His goals for the year with us include “learning as much as I can, and being as helpful as I can be to Dr. Price, helping with research and bringing back new skills to my own country.” Please help us welcome Dr. Guerra to our city when you see him in the Price Vision Group clinic.

How We’re Having An Impact With Your Help
By Marianne Price, Ph.D.

You can imagine how difficult it is to tell a teenager or young adult that they will need a cornea transplant to restore vision if their cornea has been scarred by an eye infection. While most eye infections can be treated successfully, an increasing number are resistant to current medications. So the Cornea Research Foundation is evaluating a new treatment using riboflavin (vitamin B2) eye drops in conjunction with exposure to a specific wavelength of light. This treatment has been used to strengthen the cornea (the clear window on the front of the eye) in young people with a condition known as keratoconus. In addition, it has been shown to kill many organisms and is used to sterilize blood products. We believe this investigational treatment may help fight infections that affect the cornea, so we are conducting a large 200-patient study to evaluate 2 durations of light exposure, 15 or 30 minutes.

Eye infections can affect one or both eyes and can develop in different parts of your eye. One of the most common eye infections is conjunctivitis, better known as pink eye. This is frequently seen in children and very contagious. Most cases of conjunctivitis do not lead to any lasting problems. Another frequently seen in children and very contagious. Most cases of conjunctivitis do not lead to any lasting problems. Another common eye infection is a sty. This is a small bump that develops on the eyelid when an eyelash hair follicle becomes infected. Infections in the cornea are the focus of our study, because they can lead to serious vision loss.

The symptoms you may experience with an eye infection include a burning or itching sensation in your eyes, eye redness, swelling, discharge, pain, or problems with vision. If you or someone in your family experiences these symptoms, especially if there is a lot of purulent discharge or decreased vision, you should call an eye doctor immediately. Your doctor will examine your eye and may take a culture to help identify what is causing the infection. The treatment will depend on the findings and may include compresses, eye drops, creams or antibiotics.

Contact lens users and particularly those who wear contact lenses overnight, have a significantly increased risk of developing an infection in the cornea. Contact lenses that are used for an extended period of time should be taken out and cleaned thoroughly each night, and you should change the storage case frequently to prevent buildup that could harbor organisms. Also, you should never wear contact lenses in a swimming pool or hot tub where they could become contaminated.

The causes of eye infection include bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites. Bacterial infections are the most common and the easiest to clear up with antibiotics. However, recently, we have seen a dramatic shift, with the proportion of bacterial eye infections declining and the proportion caused by harder-to-treat fungi or parasites increasing. In addition, a growing number of bacterial infections are resistant to current antibiotics, and few new antibiotics are being developed. So we are hopeful that this new approach, using riboflavin eye drops and light, will prove to be a potent new weapon against vision-threatening corneal infections. Thank you for your support, which allows us to pioneer new ways to preserve and restore vision!

Women’s Luncheon & Purse Auction
Next Month!
Thursday, April 22nd at
Renaissance Hotel North in Carmel

Contact Elaine Voci at 317-814-2993 to register, or mail your check to her at the Foundation located at 9002 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46260.

Love to Play Golf? Come to the Foundation’s Golf Classic!
13th Annual Cornea Golf Classic on June 17, 2010

Wood Wind Golf Course in Westfield, IN will be the site again for the Foundation’s 13th annual golf outing. Registration will be at 11:30 AM followed by box lunches and a shotgun start at 1:00 PM. There will be fabulous prizes for everyone in addition to our Silent Auction and valuable merchandise certificates awarded to the four leading foursomes, the longest drive, hole in one and closest to the pin. Ample beverages throughout the day and a casual catered banquet will round out the day.

Foursomes are $700, which allows for a team of four golfers, and individuals play for $175.

To register by phone, call Elaine Voci @ 317-814-2993

All proceeds benefit the Cornea Research Foundation of America.