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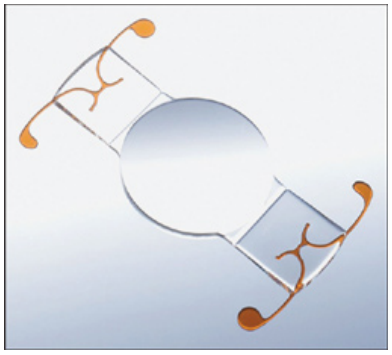
New technology helps patients focus

An estimated three million Americans undergo surgery for cataracts every year. Now an improving technology is promising to correct the cloudiness associated with cataracts and improve overall vision performance as well.

As a former actor, Max Segar has had a lifelong love of the movies. Recently though, he has had some trouble watching them, especially foreign films when "reading the subtitles in the movie house and reading the subtitles on the TV," he says.

In a procedure at St. Mary's Medical Center in San Francisco, Dr. Victor Chin is hoping to not only remove Segar's cataracts, but to restore some of the focusing power his eyes had when he was much younger.



"We're going to be removing Max's cataract in order for him to see better. After we remove the cataract, we're going to be putting in a new lens for Max," says Dr. Chin.

The device, which is marketed under the name Crystalens HD, is an improved version of an intraocular lens. The IOLs, as they are known, are implanted behind the iris in place of the eye's natural lens.

First, Dr. Chin uses ultrasound to break up the natural lense, now clouded by cataracts. A tiny vaccum tube then sucks away the remains. In its place, Dr. Chin will slip the Crystalens into the remaining pouch, attaching it to the walls with tiny flexible hangars.

"It's very flexible, which allows it to mimic the natural lens system," explains Dr. Chin.

As the eye moves, pressure on the pouch pushes and pulls the lens forward and back, allowing it to focus on objects both far away and close up.

"It's designed to move once it's in the eye," says Dr. Chin. "And that movement creates different areas of focus, to create sharp images over a range of distances."

When Dr. Chin removed the patch from Segar's right eye, the results were encouraging. From blurring vision, he was able to read the letters several lines down on an eye chart.

"Prior to surgery, without his glasses on, he could only see to the 21/50. After procedure he was very close to 20/20 line," says Dr. Chin.

"The blurriness was gone and all of a sudden things came into a clear picture," says Segar.

Segar will now have a second surgery to replace the cataract in his other eye. If all goes well, his doctors believe he will eventually be able to regain a high level of both long and short distance vision.

It is important to note that there is an out-of-pocket expense involved. While the surgical procedure is covered by insurance, the upgraded lens itself is not. The cost to the patient for the lens is typically between $2,000 and $4,000 per eye.

For Additional Information Contact:

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