

Associates In Ophthalmology Becomes First Western PA Eyecare Group To Offer Laser Cataract Surgery

The Associated Press

Associates in Ophthalmology (AIO), an eye care and surgery practice with seven locations in the Tri-State Area, has become the region's first medical group to offer bladeless, computer-controlled laser surgery for cataract removal. This procedure improves surgical precision and control. It not only enhances patient safety but also can be customized to eliminate blurred vision caused by astigmatism (irregular eye shape) and presbyopia (loss of flexibility in the eye's lens and surrounding muscles). Depending upon the complexity of the individual case, laser cataract surgery takes 10-15 minutes. It will be performed by Doctors Lisa Cibik and John Nairn in AIO's West Mifflin office at 9700 Mountain View Drive. AIO performs the most cataract procedures of any ophthalmology practice in the Pittsburgh area.

A cataract is the gradual thickening of the lens of the eye; this occurs with age and eventually leads to distorted vision. By age 80, more than half of all Americans have cataracts. In cataract surgery, an ophthalmologist removes the eye's cloudy lens and replaces it with an artificial, intraocular (IOC) lens. More than 3 million cataract surgeries are performed each year in the United States, making it this country's most common surgical procedure.

"We are proud to offer the world's most advanced eye care treatment for cataract patients right here in Pittsburgh," says Lisa Cibik, MD.

"Using computer control throughout the surgery helps us to make the most precise incisions possible, which accelerates recovery time and significantly improves results." The system that AIO uses is called LenSx® and was developed by Alcon, a Ft. Worth, TX-based provider of surgical, pharmaceutical and consumable products related to eye care.

"LenSx is proven technology that uses a femtosecond laser, which emits pulses with durations between a few femtoseconds [1 quadrillionth (1/1,000,000,000,000,000) of a second] and hundreds of femtoseconds," says John Nairn, MD. "People who undergo this procedure will be pleasantly surprised by how quick and easy it is and how fast they can resume their normal routines." For more than a decade, femtosecond lasers have helped ophthalmologists perform LASIK (Laser-Assisted In Situ Keratomileusis) surgeries with greater safety and precision than ever to change the shape of the cornea (eyeball covering) and eliminate or reduce people's need for glasses or contact lenses. And now, this technology can be utilized to enhance cataract removal surgery.

"As baby boomers increasingly need cataract removal surgery, the FDA-approved LenSx technology now offers laser-assisted, bladeless cataract removal," adds Dr.

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Cibik. "Finally, there is a safe alternative to traditional surgery that allows people to have more youthful vision to help maintain a more active lifestyle." The LenSx Difference In traditional cataract surgery, the ophthalmologist makes several small incisions manually with a blade. The lens is then broken up and removed with a high-frequency ultrasound; known as phacoemulsification, this surgical technique has remained largely unchanged for the past 30 years.

Now with laser-assisted, bladeless cataract surgery, an image-guided femtosecond laser allows the ophthalmologist to perform incisions with greater precision and accuracy. The laser creates an opening in the capsule and assists in breaking up the lens so that removal of the cataract requires less ultrasound energy and is less disruptive to the patient. The laser also allows for better management of the patient's corneal shape, increasing the patient's likelihood of not needing glasses or contact lenses after surgery. A patient can also opt to have a multifocal or a LifeStyle lens implanted to reduce their dependency on glasses and contacts for all distances - near, far and intermediate.

While traditional cataract surgery is fully covered by most private medical insurance and Medicare, bladeless cataract surgery requires patients to pay out-of-pocket for the portion of the procedure that insurance does not cover. Nevertheless, Dr. Cibik and Dr. Nairn believe that, despite the need for personal investment, a significant number of patients will choose to undergo the procedure. "As in other aspects of life, people are willing to pay extra for higher quality and better outcomes," says Dr. Cibik.

About Associates In Ophthalmology (AIO) AIO is an eye care and surgery practice with seven locations in western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The practice specializes in preventive eye care treatments and performs cataract, LASIK and other surgeries. To help patients take advantage of the newest treatments using the latest technologies, AIO has established the AIO Research Institute, where the practice's dedicated eye surgeons objectively measure and continually improve the delivery of eye care services. AIO was founded in 1899. More than a century later, AIO doctors are still treating patients as they would want their own family members to be treated. AIO's offices are in West Mifflin, Butler, Greensburg, Meadville, Monroeville, Uniontown and Wheeling.

For more information, visit www.aioeyesurgeons.com.

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