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Transplant Patient Becomes Advocate



Susan Colias

Susan Colias saw her newly born, first grandchild a few weeks ago. This might not seem significant to most of us, but Susan doesn't take this for granted. She suffers from a corneal condition known as Fuchs' Dystrophy and has had corneal transplants in both eyes in the last five years.

Since her transplants she participates in some of the foundation's research studies to find a genetic link to the disease and is an advocate for organ, eye, and tissue donation. "I am glad to be able to help and give back," Susan said.

A clinical secretary at St. Anthony Medical Center in Crown Point, Indiana, Susan's commitment to "donating life" led to her being invited to be one of 10 guest speakers during a recent program at the hospital commemorating National Donate Life Month. She related her corneal transplant journey to the crowd made up of hospital doctors, staff, and visitors. Many were surprised that non-viable/non-suitable donated corneas that could not be used for human transplantation were still important and worthwhile. These corneas, although not suitable for human transplantation, are instrumental in training eye surgeons in advanced transplant techniques.

Additionally, corneas of those who have been recipients of transplants may also be donated. In fact, they are valuable to researchers such as foundation founder Dr. Francis Price Jr.

For more information on how to donate your corneas to research, see "Ask the Doctor" column on page 4.



Ask Your Doctor By Dr. Francis Price Jr.

Q. I have had a DSEK corneal transplant and would like to support the research done in this area. After my death, I would like to donate my eyes to research. Is there a need for my eyes and if so what do I need to do in order to ensure that my wishes are carried out?

A. You are very generous to offer to donate your eyes for research purposes and we appreciate it. As you may know, the small incision transplant procedure, known as DSEK, has been performed in the United States less than 10 years, and yet it has become the standard of care for endothelial diseases and conditions. But, we have little knowledge of the long-term survival of healthy grafts. Your donation will provide valuable information for eye doctors and their patients, not only here in the US but also around the world.

The best way to ensure that your generous wishes are met is to first

discuss your donation with your family so they are aware of your desires. If you have internet access, you may access state specific donation requirements and register for organ donation through Donate Life America at www.donatelife.net. If not, you may then contact your local eye bank and inform them that you wish to donate your corneas to research. Eye banks handle the details and process of procuring eye tissue and its transportation for human transplantation or to a research facility. A list of accredited eye banks is available from the Eye Bank Association of America at www.restoresight.org or

by calling **202-775-4999**.

Your local eye bank will tell you about any state requirements that you will need to comply with. They will also be able to answer any specific questions you may have for your individual situation.

When the time comes, please speak with or have your family talk with the hospital staff conveying your wish to donate your corneas for research and that they are to be sent to Dr. Francis Price (c/o Price Vision Group, 9002 North Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46260). The hospital staff will call the local eye bank and notify them of your donation.

Fellow Awarded Grant To Develop Improved LASIK Screening Methods

Foundation fellow Federico Guerra, M.D., has received a \$5,000 grant from the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery Foundation to develop improved screening methods for patients undergoing laser refractive surgery. This research could have significant benefits for the growing number of patients seeking refractive surgery by providing better screening for potential risk factors before undergoing surgery and in the process make this already safe surgery even safer.

"The study is unique because it is designed to find defining factors in pre-operative screening, so we can better predict the stability and future changes of a cornea. This could allow doctors and patients to better assess how successful a LASIK procedure will be based on the unique characteristics of each individual patient," said Dr. Guerra.

He explained that the study will consist of a re-evaluation conducted on patients who had pre-operative screening using a special imaging device, known as the Oculus Pentacam,



Dr. Federico Guerra

safely have laser refractive surgery.

Approximately 9 million LASIK surgeries have been performed in the United States to date. While the procedure is considered safe, some complications may still occur. Patients are screened pre-operatively to assess their risk of developing complications such as unstable vision. A review of thousands of past LASIK cases shows that 8 percent or more of the patients who have undergone LASIK safely and without complications would have been erroneously classified as "high risk" with a screening system that is currently in widespread use.

followed by refractive surgery at Price Vision Group in Indianapolis one to two years ago. Patients will be asked to return for a free eye exam that includes taking another image of the cornea. The two images will be compared and evaluated to help identify those pre-operative characteristics that indicate a patient can

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Welcome To New Staff

Development director sees job as giving opportunity



Julie Benson

Health care has always fascinated Julie Benson, new foundation development director. When she was a child, she had to have stitches in her chin. She remembers watching the doctor in the mirror placed above the table stitching her chin and thinking how “neat” it was to be able to do that.

Although biology was one of her favorite subjects, she enjoyed reading and writing more and Julie concentrated her schooling and efforts on journalism. Her natural skill in this area lead her to begin her career as a health care reporter for a newspaper before going into health care public relations, communications, marketing, and management. After working some 20 years, Julie returned to school to study nonprofit management with an emphasis on health and social entrepreneurship. Fresh out of school, she hopes to use this knowledge and her past experience to contribute to the success of the CRFA.

“I’m excited about working at the foundation because I believe in the mission and personally have a stake in vision since nearly everyone in my family has benefited from new technologies and treatments designed to prevent blindness or help restore sight,” Julie said. “I see my job as giving people the opportunity to join with us in finding new therapies and to be a part of those discoveries.” She added, “We all can’t be world-renowned researchers and surgeons like Dr. Price but we can be a partner in his work through philanthropy.”

Student intern plans medical career



Maraya Baumanis

Maraya Baumanis remembers sitting on the couch with her family when she was seven years old and telling her parents “I love helping people and I’m going to be a doctor some day!” And, she is well on her way to her life-long dream. Maraya is a junior at Butler University majoring in pre-med/chemistry.

“Having a goal of being a doctor someday has kept me focused all my life on school and my grades,” Maraya said. She said that although she isn’t sure at this

point what kind of doctor she would eventually like to be, she said that ophthalmology has moved up to the top of her list.

She joins the foundation in the role of research intern working initially on the Fuchs’ Dystrophy and cross-linking studies currently being conducted at the foundation. Working at CRFA combines her two loves: research and people. “I enjoy conducting studies and working with new technology but I also love treating patients,” she said. “Here at the foundation – it is perfect - I will be able to do both.” This passion was demonstrated when she talked about seeing her first live surgery shortly after joining the foundation; she had one word to describe it – “Amazing.”

How We’re Making An Impact With Your Help

by Marianne O. Price, Ph.D.



This winter, our USA men’s bobsled team made history by winning the Olympic Gold medal for the first time in 60 years. The team’s young driver, *Steve Holcomb, almost wasn’t able to compete because he suffers from keratoconus. Thanks to an investigational treatment, known as cross-linking, along

with implantation of small plastic lenses, Steve’s eyesight was restored and he led his team to victory.

With your support, the Cornea Research Foundation has been working for several years to fine-tune the cross-linking treatment and help make it available to patients with keratoconus. Keratoconus is a condition that strikes young people in their teens and 20s. It causes the cornea, or clear window on the front of the eye, to thin and bulge outward. This results in distorted vision and progressive near-sightedness. In the early stages,

hard contact lenses can be helpful. Unfortunately, about one in five keratoconus patients progress to the point that nothing short of a cornea transplant can restore vision.

Cross-linking is designed to strengthen the cornea and keep the keratoconus from progressing. This investigational treatment takes about one hour and involves applying riboflavin (vitamin B2) eye drops in combination with exposure to a special wavelength of UV light.

The Cornea Research Foundation is collaborating with nine other sites around the country to gather detailed information on how patients respond to this treatment as part of the approval process required for it to become more generally available. We are also evaluating which frequency of eye drop dosing is most effective. We appreciate your support, which allows us to find new and better ways to restore vision and help people pursue their dreams, just as Steve Holcomb did in the Olympics.

*Steve Holcomb was treated at a facility in California.

Cornea Research Foundation Fundraisers

Offer Fun for Everyone

Taking a Break



Left to right are Harry Scheid, golf committee chairman; Walter Gross, CRFA board member and golf committee member; Joe Kack Jr., and Joe Kack Sr.

Golfers at the 13th Annual Cornea Golf Classic on June 17th enjoyed a perfect day at the Wood Wind Golf Club in Westfield, Indiana for hitting the links, enjoying friends, bidding on silent auction, listening for winners, and good food.

What Will You Bid?



Friends; Pat Jacoby, Kim Dickman, and Joy Leppert

Nearly 100 women came to this year’s CRFA Women’s Luncheon & Purse Auction at the Renaissance Inn on April 22nd in Carmel, Indiana, to have a chance to bid on the some 20 purses, handbags, and backpacks filled with different themed goodies. Friends Pat Jacoby, Kim Dickman, and Joy Leppert, take a look at a picnic tote complete with an accompanying handmade quilt donated by Price Vision Group staff member Laurie Potrzebowski.