



FLORIDA EYE
Microsurgical Institute, Inc.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ONCE GOING BLIND, TWENTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD CATARACT PATIENT RYANE MCKENNA OF PALM BEACH COUNTY NOW DESCRIBES HER VISION AS “CRYSTAL” CLEAR AND COLORFUL!

August 14th, 2009, Boynton Beach... Say the word ‘cataracts’ and chances are the image that pops into your head is that of an older person, and, that image would be pretty much on target, *however*, you might be very surprised to learn that about 500 or so children in the United States are born with, or develop cataracts each year.

Sometimes cataracts in children are an inherited condition, and sometimes they are the result of such infections as Rubella (German measles) during pregnancy. Some children develop cataracts later in childhood, the result of injuries, drugs, radiation therapy or other conditions. In twenty-one-year-old Ryane McKenna’s case, as a child born with Down Syndrome, she was prone to cataract development. Ryane suffered from vision problems all of her life, and was wearing glasses by age five. As she grew older her vision grew poorer and poorer, and she was slowly losing her sight.

Ryane’s pediatric ophthalmologist, Dr. Lee Friedman of Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute, told Ryane and her family that it was time for her to make an appointment with his partner, Dr. Barry Schechter, the Institute’s cataract surgery, external disease and corneal transplantation specialist. Dr. Schechter discussed various cataract treatment options with Ryane and her family, and the decision to go with lens replacement surgery was made after they received the thumbs up from Ryane’s uncle, Dominick Marino, an optometrist in Palm Beach County. “There were other ways to go that were

covered by insurance,” says Ryane’s dad, “but my brother-in-law researched the lens, the procedure and Dr. Schechter, and he told us in his opinion implanting Crystalens would not only greatly improve Ryane’s quality of life, but that she might not even need glasses after the procedure.”

That statement turned out to be absolutely accurate. Ryane, whose vision is now 20/30, no longer needs her glasses. “Actually, Ryane won’t ever need glasses again,” says Dr. Schechter. “For her, Crystalens is a permanent replacement solution.”

Lens replacement was also a good choice for another patient of Dr. Schechter’s - 18-year-old Tyler Webb, who decided, along with his parents, to have Crystalens implanted in his left eye because of a cataract that was, according to Tyler, slowing him down. “I didn’t even notice anything was going on with my left eye, because my right eye was making up for the loss of vision in the left eye.”

In Tyler’s case, he was totally unaware he had a cataract. It was discovered when his mom took his two sisters for eye exams. While they were at the doctor’s office Tyler had his eyes examined as well. During his exam, Dr. Friedman discovered Tyler had a cataract in his left eye. The reason why he developed the cataract is unknown, but sure enough he did indeed have one.

Tyler tried wearing contact lenses for awhile, but he hated putting them in, and says, “they were just too much of a hassle for me and they bothered my eyes.” He also hated having to drive with a restricted driver’s license, which in his case meant that he always had to wear his glasses or contacts when driving. Soon leaving for Valencia College in Orlando, Tyler wanted fewer hassles, which for him meant no more contact lenses. And so, after consulting with Dr. Schechter, Tyler, like Ryane, decided on lens replacement surgery. For Ryane and William, having Dr. Schechter implant Crystalens was the way to go.

But how would someone else know, adult or child, if he or she was even a candidate for the lens replacement? Dr. Schechter says that overall, ideal candidates have never had cataract surgery before, they have no major health problems, and they have healthy eyes.

“We generally see cataracts in patients in their fifties and sixties and older – people whose vision has worsened and they don’t want to wear reading glasses anymore. Ryane and William were by no means our average patients, since they are both younger, but they were still perfect candidates.”

Just who is the usual candidate? Well, that’s when that image of the older person comes back into play. There are 20.5 million Americans age 40 and older who develop cataracts, and by the age of 80, your chances are just about 50/50 that you’ll have developed cataracts. “Whether you are 15 or 50, 25 or 75, it’s all about improving the quality of life for our patients,” says Dr. Schechter. “Ryane and her parents are thrilled with her results, as are William’s parents.”

The Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute offers a full range of comprehensive ophthalmologic care, including routine eye care and examinations, pediatric eye care, dry eyes, advanced corneal, retinal and cataract procedures, laser treatments, glaucoma and diabetic procedures, and various other sophisticated treatments. With its own pediatric wing and fully accredited outpatient surgical center in Boynton Beach, the Institute has additional offices in Boca Raton and Wellington.

Also at Florida Eye with Dr. Schechter and Dr. Friedman is Dr. Randy Katz, the Institute’s retinal and macro degeneration specialist. Dr. Jonathan Chua covers comprehensive general ophthalmology as does Dr. Jason Gorscak. For more information on the Institute, its physicians, current clinical trials and Crystalens, please contact Gwen Cohan at (561) 736-5050 and visit www.fleyedocs.com.

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SIDEBAR: What is a cataract?

A cataract is the clouding of the eye's normally clear lens, blocking the passage of light needed for vision. They form slowly and cause no pain. Some stay small and hardly affect vision, but if the cataract does grow and begin to affect your vision, it can usually be removed with surgery.

"Cataracts are the leading cause of blindness worldwide; however, in most cases, vision loss from cataracts is reversible," says Dr. Barry Schechter, the cornea and external disease specialist at Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute. "New techniques developed over the past decade have made cataract surgery one of the safest and most successful procedures available in terms of restoring quality of life to patients." Each year there are more than 1.6 million of these delicate eye surgeries performed in the United States, with a small number of them on children.

"There are no drugs or exercises that will make a cataract disappear, and contrary to popular belief, cataracts are not removed using lasers. Lasers are used in follow-up procedures, if needed. Cataract surgery is most often done as an outpatient procedure under local anesthesia," says Dr. Schechter. "The cloudy natural lens can be replaced with an artificial lens to give the eye proper focusing power. In most cases, the improvement in the patient's vision is profound."

So how do you know if you have a cataract? Dr. Schechter explains: "Some people notice a gradual painless blurring of vision, double vision in one eye or fading or yellowing of colors. When older patients mention sensitivity to glare and/or bright light or trouble driving at night, this may be caused by cataracts. Or, if a patient needs frequent changes to his or her glasses or contact lens prescriptions, I'll evaluate him or her for a cataract." Dr. Schechter wants to dispel the notion that a

cataract has to be "ripe" before it's removed. "That's just not true. The best time to have a cataract removed is when it starts to interfere with the things you like to do. However, cataract surgery, although quite safe, is still surgery. If cataracts don't affect your quality of life, you may feel that surgery is not needed. The only person who can really decide when it's time to have them removed is you, under the care of your doctor."
