

Retinal Specialist Joins Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute In Wellington

Story by Ron Bukley • Photo by Abner Pedraza

Dr. Joseph T. Nezgoda, one of the few retinal specialists in the area, recently joined the Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute in Wellington. “I focus on macular degeneration, diabetic eye disease and other retinal diseases, including retinal detachments and intraocular inflammation — essentially any disease of the retina,” Nezgoda said.

Although he is a retinal surgeon, his primary focus is on the clinical treatment and prevention of eye disease.

“When necessary, we perform surgery, and the surgery includes emergent surgery such as retinal detachments that could stave off potential blindness,” he said. “Severe diabetes requires surgery to relieve what is known as a tractional retinal detachment.”

He also treats retinopathy, or abnormal blood vessel growth, sometimes found in premature babies. “That is the reason that Stevie Wonder is blind and countless others,” Nezgoda said. “Had they been born when the treatment was more common, they might have had a different fate.”

Nezgoda said it’s important that the community knows that it is served by a full-time retina specialist. “As a fellowship-trained retina specialist, I am able to perform services for patients with [conditions] such as macular degeneration or diabetic eye disease,” he said, noting that he is available for emergencies and non-emergency retina issues. “My group wanted the community to be well-served in this capacity, and that’s why they hired me.”

Nezgoda comes to Wellington after completing his fellowship in medical and surgical diseases at the University of California. He graduated with honors from Georgetown University and attended medical school at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. While there, he also earned a master’s degree. He has also been a researcher at the National Institutes of Health. “The retina

is sort of specialized,” he said. “You have to not only do a year of internship and three years of ophthalmology, but you have to do another two years of retina specialty following that.”

Nezgoda was especially happy to come to Wellington because his family lives in the area.

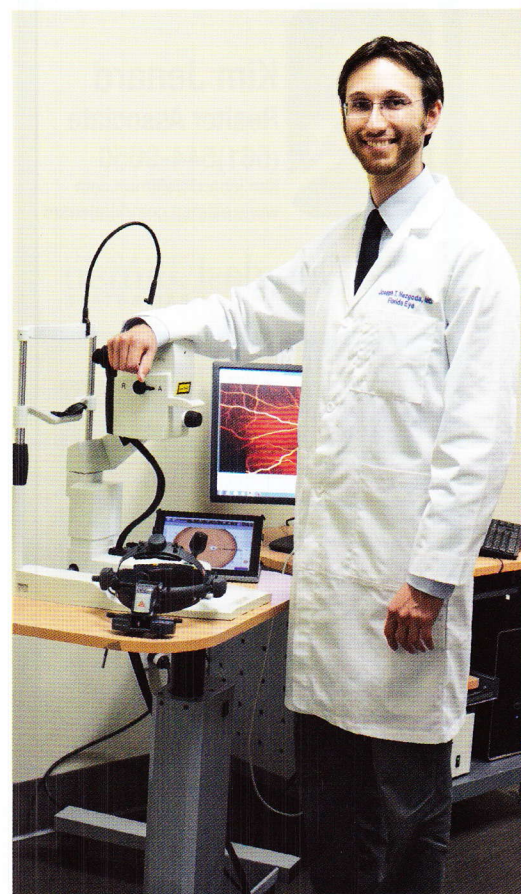
“My family, originally from the Northeast, moved down here some years back. Both my mother and my grandparents are in Palm Beach Gardens,” he said. “The group that I’m joining is truly excellent, well-trained and well-regarded, and in a group that’s really close to my family.”

Nezgoda said that he finds great satisfaction in his specialty, being able to treat a wide range of age groups. “It’s really a beautiful specialty. I’m able to help the youngest babies to the eldest seniors,” he said. “I can treat pretty much all patients in the population, which very few specialties allow for.”

Another aspect that he finds fascinating is what might be described as the “brain’s window to the world.”

“The retina is neural tissue. It’s brain tissue, and the retina sort of captures the light, and a very elegant mechanism sends signals back to the brain,” he said. “If, for whatever reason, that isn’t functioning, vision is impaired. The retina is very delicate tissue and does not regenerate, so it’s like performing surgical care on the most delicate part of the eye.”

Nezgoda can see many other diseases and health conditions through the retina. “I can look into someone’s eyes and



tell if they have high blood pressure, if they have diabetes or if they have any infectious diseases,” he said. “I can see if they have tuberculosis or lupus. I can see so many things. By saying the eye is the window to the soul, in that respect, it’s really the window to your health.”

Nezgoda will host a continuing education event for physicians to discuss diseases that he treats at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 21 at Jordan’s Steak Bistro in Wellington, hosted by Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute.

“It’s for all the community doctors to come out and discuss diseases like diabetic eye disease and what to look for, when they should be concerned, as well as macular degeneration and what can be done,” he said.

Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute has offices in Boca Raton, Boynton Beach, Juno Beach and Wellington. The Wellington office is located at 2575 State Road 7 near the Mall at Wellington Green. For more info., call (561) 792-1205 or visit www.fleyedocs.com.