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Quality Eye Care

Treatment for macular degeneration should be painless.

Helen Langmead was living with macular degeneration and cataracts, and she was in agony.

While those conditions negatively affect vision, they are supposed to be painless. Ironically, what was causing the discomfort was not her optical conditions, but rather the treatment she was receiving from her doctor. And sadly, Helen didn't know any better. She thought the hurt was the norm.



"I'm seeing things like I have not seen in a long time," says Helen.

Then, a complete stranger taught her otherwise.

Helen had never met the woman prior to their encounter at the pharmacy and she may never see her again. She does not even remember the woman's name. Nonetheless, when Helen speaks of the stranger, she does so in glowing terms.

"I've always thought of her as a guardian angel who came to my rescue," declares Helen. "I really believe that. I would not be where I am today if it had not been for her."

Helen is referring to her status as a patient at Vero Beach's Center for Advanced Eye Care.

While making small talk in line at the pharmacy, Helen mentioned to the unknown woman that she has macular degeneration. The woman replied she had the same condition. When Helen mentioned the painful treatments, the woman looked at her cross-eyed, explaining to Helen that she should not feel one twinge of pain.

"She recommended I switch to the Center for Advanced Eye Care," recounts Helen. "She seemed so happy

with how they treated her that I decided to give them a chance. It was one of the best decisions I ever made.”

Macular degeneration

Macular degeneration is a disease that typically affects older patients, age 50 and above. It is the degenerative process of the central area of the retina, which is where the macula is located.

“Approximately ten million individuals in the US have age-related macular degeneration,” educates Center for Advanced Eye Care’s Adam M. Katz, MD, who is board certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology, with dual fellowship training in retina care.

Helen has dry macular degeneration in her right eye and wet in her left.

Dry macular degeneration is caused when yellowish deposits called *drusen* develop in the retina beneath the macula, blurring the central vision. Ninety percent of those living with macular degeneration have the dry form of the disease.

Wet macular degeneration occurs when abnormal blood vessels grow under the central retina (the macula). These blood vessels bleed and leak fluid that damages the macula to the point that it can cause total central vision loss.

Those living with macular degeneration may notice that straight lines in the landscape – such as telephone poles, the sides of buildings, or streetlight posts – appear wavy, crooked, or distorted. They may also notice a need for brighter lights when reading or a gradual loss of color intensity.

“There is not a treatment or surgical procedure to restore vision if the macula is damaged to the point of scar tissue by macular degeneration,” warns Dr. Katz.

For this reason, it is imperative that patients have the condition diagnosed and treated, if necessary, before permanent damage can occur.

Treatment options

The progression of dry macular degeneration can be slowed through powerful doses of Vitamins C and E, as well as zinc, copper, lutein and zeaxanthin, while the wet form is treated through injections of drugs like Lucentis, Eylea and Avastin directly into the back of the eye.

Such a remedy may sound uncomfortable, but Dr. Katz states that these injections, when administered at the Center for Advanced Eye Care, are relatively painless.

Unfortunately for Helen, her former doctor’s injections were not.

“When I received the injections from my old doctor, it was a terrible, terrible ordeal,” laments Helen. “The injections were really hurting me and I’d have to go right home and lie down. The pain was there for hours. One time, the pain lasted for an entire day.”

“There are different techniques when it comes to injections,” states Dr. Katz. “I have given over two thousand such injections and I’ve modified my technique over the years to make it as comfortable as possible for the patients.

“For instance, I use topical drops that work extremely well. They numb the eyes. Most patients are amazed. They don’t even realize I injected them.”

Helen backs this claim, saying she



Helen Langmead

feels no pain at the hands of Dr. Katz.

Besides treating her macular degeneration, Dr. Katz also helped remedy another of Helen’s visual problems. He referred her to his partner William J. Mallon, MD, for her cataracts.

Cataract solutions

A cataract is a clouding of the natural lens in the eye. The lenses in our eyes grow throughout our lives, with new layers added each year, much like rings around a tree. Eventually, those layers become cloudy and darken. As light is blocked, blurred images form on the retina.

“Cataracts are along the lines of getting gray hair and wrinkles,” says Dr. Katz. “It’s not a disease. Everybody gets them.

“After examining Helen, I discovered she had visually significant cataracts, meaning on a scale of one to four, they were pushing a four in both eyes.”

It was a shocking revelation for Helen. Her former doctor told her that she had cataracts, but he never mentioned how bad they had gotten; he failed to mention that her cataracts had thrust her to the brink of blindness.

She credits the discovery to Dr. Katz’ comprehensive assessment.

“I never had an eye exam like that,” gushes Helen. “The equipment they have is unbelievable. They showed me pictures of what was wrong with my eyes, pointing out the cataracts. I had never seen anything like that. I was in a different world.”

A new world

The cataract surgery, performed by Dr. Mallon using the latest techniques, was a huge success.

With her new lenses plus the treatment she continues to receive for her macular degeneration, Helen exclaims that she is seeing the world better than she has in many years.

“The world amazes me again! The blues have never been bluer. The sunrises and sunsets are just beautiful.”

Helen has even started knitting and crocheting again, hobbies that had been put on the shelf due to her poor vision.

“I recently finished a baby blanket for the christening of my seventh great-grandchild,” she boasts. “I’m seeing things like I have not seen in a long time.”

Helen says she owes it all to Dr. Katz, Dr. Mallon, Center for Advanced Eye Care, and the “guardian angel” she met at the pharmacy.

“She told me Dr. Katz is the best in the world,” says Helen. “She was right. I wish I knew who she was so I could thank her.”



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