

Surgery allows student to see through a new set of eyes

An Elon student recounts the vision correction surgery that helped her see the world in a new light

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Reporter

There was only one thing I wanted when I turned 21; a new set of eyes. Laser vision correction surgery, or LASIK, hopefully would bring an end to waking up in the middle of the night and wondering what time it was, mornings of searching for my glasses and the restrictions nearsightedness brought to me.

The cost of the procedure can range from \$800 to \$2,000 per eye, and if you can afford it, you will see a change in your life.

I went to Southeastern Eye Center in Greensboro Nov. 26 for a free consultation with Dr. Karl Stonecipher. I was in the center for about two hours undergoing extensive tests to see if I would be a candidate for surgery.

Stonecipher reviewed my charts and the pictures that were taken of my eyes that day. He said I was a perfect candidate for the surgery.

Next, I would have to make the decision regarding which type of surgery I would have. He highly recommended custom LASIK because of the high-order aberrations that were found in my eyes.

High-order aberrations are aberrations other than sphere and cylinder shape that have an impact on vision. However, he recommended I research the different types of surgery and said the decision could be made the day of surgery.

After making an appointment to have the surgery on Dec. 12, I went on the Internet to research the different types of LASIK and learn about the differences.

Custom LASIK targets the high-order aberrations which could attribute to night glare and halos. Conventional LASIK only corrects the sphere and cylinder aberrations in the eye.

Custom LASIK is the newest laser vision correction procedure to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

Stonecipher has been performing custom LASIK for about six months and said only about one in five of his patients are candidates for the procedure.

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For those who are candidates, he highly recommends the procedure for an enhanced quality of vision.

When my dad and I arrived at the office around 1:30 p.m. for surgery, I had not worn contacts for seven days and had been on pre-operative medications for the past three days. To ensure accuracy and predictability the staff completed tests that had been performed previously.

After my testing was complete, I informed Stonecipher of my decision to have Custom LASIK. I signed the consent forms and was taken to the preoperative area. There, I received postoperative instructions and medication to help me relax during surgery.

I waited in a small office and struggled to watch TV. Shortly after, I was taken to a small room where Stonecipher would make the flap,

and placed in a chair that resembled a dentist chair. Throughout the whole surgery, he talked to me about Elon and events that were taking place during the holiday season.

While he talked, he began the surgery by placing a lid speculum in my eye to hold it open. There was some minor discomfort.

Next, he made the corneal flap by placing a suction ring around my eyes. This caused minor pain and discomfort for one minute in each eye.

The nurses counted down the time, which made it pass faster. When this part of the procedure was completed, the nurses helped me to another room.

This is where the actual laser was used to correct my vision. I was told to focus on the red dot above my eye. I could see the flap moving as

he worked to place it in position. There was not any discomfort during this part of the surgery and I had become very sleepy by this point.

Surgery was over in about 30 minutes and shields were placed over my eyes. I was told to return to the office at 8 the next morning for a follow up and to check my vision.

The nurse said I might feel a burning sensation in my eyes in about 30 minutes and this was normal.

As I was leaving the office, two hours later, my vision was blurred and my dad helped me to the car. I immediately fell asleep and slept for the hour-long ride home. I never felt the burning the sensation.

I took a prescribed sleeping pill when I arrived home around 4:30 p.m. and slept until 10:30 p.m. When I woke, my vision was still

somewhat blurred. However, I went back to bed and when I awoke around 2:30 a.m., I could see. It was the most amazing feeling; I could actually see the clock.

When I returned to the office the next morning, Stonecipher checked my eyesight. I had 20/20 vision and was reading letters on the 20/15 line.

For the next seven nights, I slept with shields over my eyes. Four times a day for two weeks I placed two kinds of prescription drops in my eyes. I also did not wear eye make-up or go swimming during those two weeks.

During the next two weeks, my eyes were sensitive to light and halos were visible. This is typical, and as time passed these symptoms decreased.

At my two week check-up, I was still reading the 20/20 line and more on the 20/15. My eyes were healing very well.

It has now been two months since my surgery and my eyes are doing great. I no longer experience halos and sensitivity to light.

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LASIK Laser Vision Correction Facts

- LASIK is the most advanced eye correction procedure available
- The procedure utilizes the Excimer laser, which is specially designed not to hurt eye tissues
- The surgery process is completely painless
- LASIK can correct nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism
- The procedure typically lasts between two hours and four hours
- The laser is actually only used for about one minute
- A change in vision is usually noticed in one hour to two hours after surgery
- 98 percent to 99 percent of the patient population have legal driving vision the day after surgery
- Laser vision correction has a low incidence of side effects and complications

Source: www.southeasterneyecenter.com

