

Tulane

Medical Center

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Tulane-Lakeside

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For

Immediate Release

Canaloplasty surgery provides new hope to glaucoma patients.

An innovative procedure that restores the natural irrigation system to the eyes of glaucoma patients is being performed at Tulane Medical Center by Dr. Ramesh Ayyala. Fewer than 400 of these surgeries have been performed in the United States thus far.

Director of Glaucoma Service at Tulane Medical Center, Ayyala is the only ophthalmologist performing canaloplasty in Louisiana. He compares canaloplasty to an angioplasty for the heart because the minimally invasive canaloplasty utilizes micro-catheter technology to widen the main drainage canal around the iris. "This is probably the best operation designed for glaucoma patients," Ayyala said. "Recovery is faster than with previous eye surgeries and there are fewer post operative complications," he added.

Glaucoma is known as the "sneak thief of sight," because it silently takes away vision, Ayyala said. Primary open-angle glaucoma, the most common form of the disease, progresses with few or no symptoms until the condition reaches an advanced stage. Half of all glaucoma in the United States goes undetected, he said. The disease is usually discovered during routine eye exams.

Glaucoma currently accounts for 18 percent of U.S. blindness. By the year 2020, it is estimated there will be 3.36 million cases of primary open-angle glaucoma in the United States. Louisiana has a very high incidence of glaucoma among its African American and the Cajun white populations, which are at greater risk. Patients who are nearsighted, have diabetes, cardiovascular problems or high blood pressure are also more likely to develop glaucoma.

Glaucoma is associated with an obstruction to the drainage pathways of the eye with subsequent accumulation of the aqueous humor, leading to elevated intraocular pressure. When left untreated, the pressure can cause permanent damage to the optic nerve and blindness. Treatment is directed towards lowering the eye pressure, which can be achieved by using glaucoma drops, laser treatment or surgery. Eye drops and laser may be recommended for patients with mild-to-moderate glaucoma. Drops are expensive, must be used multiple times every day and can have potential side effects.

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Laser treatment is directed towards opening the drainage pathways of the eye and takes one or two minutes to perform in the office. However, that works in only about 70 percent of patients and may not lower the eye pressure sufficiently in patients with severe glaucoma.

Canaloplasty relieves eye pressure by three mechanisms. First, pressure is released through dilation of the patient's collapsing drainage system with a flexible micro-catheter. Second, an intraluminal suture is used to tighten the canal and increase outflow through the eyes' natural drainage. Third, fluid is returned to the natural downstream collectors.

Improved outflow results through use of the patients' own natural drainage system, facilitating a rapid vision recovery with much less long-term risk of infection. Long-term results beyond two years are still unknown because the surgery is still new.

An Associate Professor of Ophthalmology and Director of the Glaucoma Service at Tulane Medical Center, Dr. Ayyala received ophthalmology training in the Royal Liverpool University Hospital System, United Kingdom in the early 1990s, graduating from the prestigious Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh. He later completed fellowships at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary and Boston Medical Center, studying glaucoma and corneal disease before coming to Tulane.

For further information, call 504-988-2183.

Tulane Medical Center is an acclaimed teaching, research and medical facility serving the greater New Orleans area. TMC has more than 500 credentialed physicians who provide leading-edge care, ranging from primary to tertiary to quaternary. Facilities in the New Orleans area include Tulane Medical Center, Tulane-Lakeside Hospital, Tulane Hospital for Children, Tulane Cancer Center Comprehensive Clinic, Tulane Abdominal Transplant at Tulane Medical Center, Tulane Multispecialty Center Metairie, Tulane Multispecialty Center Uptown, Tulane Multispecialty Center Downtown and the Tulane Institute for Sports Medicine. TMC is a partnership jointly owned by HCA and Tulane University. For more information about Tulane Medical Center, please visit www.tuhc.com or call 1-800-588-5800.

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