



Ophthalmology surgeons performing new type of cataract surgery: patients receive freezing eye drops, but no sedation

October 17, 2017 - Having cataract surgery just got a whole lot easier for a select group of patients: ophthalmologists at Misericordia Health Centre are now performing cataract surgery without sedation for low-risk patients.

“Initiatives in health care, like this one, demonstrate the innovation and collaboration that continue to improve the health services offered to Manitobans,” said Kelvin Goertzen, Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living. “This is a terrific example of some more great work to offer better service to patients.”

“No sedation is a new alternative to patients with no other medical issues,” said Dr. Mathen Mathen, WRHA head of ophthalmology. “There is no IV, patients can walk into the operating room and, ultimately, it means a faster recovery time.”

The no sedation process also reduces the cost of cataract surgery; by performing 1,500 no-sedation cataract surgery cases this year, MHC ophthalmology surgeons will add 200 additional cataract surgeries with the savings.

VIDEO OPPORTUNITY – watch MHC’s surgical team perform a cataract surgery!

When: 11:45 a.m. Tuesday, October 17, 2017

Where: Room 308 – take elevator A to the 3rd floor

What: Watch a no-sedation cataract surgery case (~15 minutes)

Who: Interviews after surgery with Dr. Mathen Mathen

Cataracts without sedation are an extension of the innovative work the MHC team has been doing for years. In 2015, for example, a research study pre-screened cataract patients into two categories: high risk and low risk. The low-risk patients no longer require a preoperative history and physical with their family physician, saving patients’ time and \$1.2 million annually in unnecessary testing and extra doctors’ visits. No-sedation patients are deemed lowest surgical risk.

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Eye Care Centre of Excellence

Cataract Surgery - by the numbers

9,245 cataract surgeries performed:

3,698 - high surgical risk

4,047 - low surgical risk

1,500 - lowest surgical risk (no sedation)



What is a cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the lens which is caused by the aging process, blunt trauma or some systemic diseases. Some people experience blurry vision, haziness, double vision, difficulty with night driving and sensitivity to light.

What are the types of cataract cases?

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High Risk: patients with new or unstable medical conditions require a preoperative history and physical with their family physician.

Low Risk: lower-risk stable patients do not require a history and physical.

The majority of high and lower risk cataract cases are performed under topical anesthetic with sedation, although some still have general anesthesia.

No sedation: a sub-section of low-risk cataract cases for patients who have had no serious medical conditions in the past 12 months. These cases receive only topical anesthetic, freezing eye drops, without sedation.

How are the types of cataract cases decided?

Ophthalmologists determine which patients are assigned to each category of cataract surgery based on their surgical risk. Patients are assessed again on the day of the surgery to ensure there is no change in their condition since their surgery was scheduled.

Patient safety is assessed at multiple stages in surgery preparation and recovery to ensure each patient gets the treatment that is best for them.



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How are cataracts treated?

When the cataract interferes with normal daily activities, a patient can be referred to an ophthalmologist to have it removed surgically. During surgery, ultrasonic waves break down the lens material and the surgeon removes it through a very small incision. An intraocular lens (IOL) is then implanted to replace the natural lens.

What is an intraocular lens (IOL)?

An intraocular lens is an artificial lens for the eye, which replaces the eye's natural lens during cataract surgery.

How will an IOL affect my vision?

IOLs come in many different strengths, just like prescription eye glasses or contact lenses. An eye doctor will determine which lens is best for each patient.

Misericordia's Eye Care Centre of Excellence is the largest comprehensive surgical and treatment program in Western Canada serving Manitoba, Northwestern Ontario, the Territories and Nunavut. The 25 surgical ophthalmologists perform nearly 12,000 surgeries annually, including corneal transplants, glaucoma, retinal and oncology - and provide 24-hour on call services for eye emergencies. More than 32,000 patients are seen in ambulatory eye clinics for assessments and treatments such as eye injections for retinal disease. Complementing the centre is the Manitoba Retinal Screening and Vision Program, which screens for eye diseases in remote locations, the Misericordia Eye Bank and the University of Manitoba Ophthalmology Residency Program, including a resident clinic.