New Surgical Options available for Glaucoma

Over the last year several new glaucoma surgical devices have become available in New Zealand. These devices offer a new less invasive option compared to standard glaucoma surgery which is trabeculectomy. Each edition of Eyelights will highlight one of these new devices.

The Xen gel, is a tiny gel tube, approximately 6 mm long and with an internal opening of 0.5 – the size of an eyelash. This can be inserted into the eye to allow fluid to drain away and reduce the pressure buildup in the eyes of people with primary open-angle glaucoma – the most common type.

Glaucoma is initially treated with drops or laser technology but when it came to surgery the most commonly used option was to have flaps cut through each layer of the eye. Traditional glaucoma surgery involves quite an invasive operation with stitches and a long and often delayed post-operative recovery period. Another advantage is that the surgery is a shorter procedure with a Xen than with traditional glaucoma surgery.

To insert the 6mm long Xen implant, two tiny incisions of less than 2mm are needed. The Xen is thought to reduce many of the risks of a traditional glaucoma surgery and has a much quicker recovery. For example, sutures can serve as a source of infection but in Xen surgery the incisions are small and no sutures are needed. The average pressure reduction with a Xen procedure is in the range of 12-15 mmHg.

An additional advantage of the Xen implant is that it still allows the option for undertaking a trabeculectomy in the future if the patient requires. These days, glaucoma surgeons see many patients who will live until 100. These patients want to still be visually independent. The goal, therefore, is to preserve their vision as long as possible. That to me is one of the more fundamental advantages. With a Xen, if the...
pressure increases years down the line, it is still possible to do another Xen or you can get the traditional trabeculectomy. It offers an additional surgical step that was not previously available.

The Xen has been performed by around 10-15 surgeons in New Zealand and is available in some public hospitals as well. Several insurance companies do pay for Xen.

It is still in the early days, but is already perceived to be an exciting and immensely useful tool for the glaucoma surgeon.

Article prepared by Professor Helen Danesh-Meyer / Chairperson Glaucoma New Zealand

New Readers

To those of you who have joined Glaucoma NZ since the last issue of Eyelights, we welcome you!

For your information here are some basic facts about glaucoma:

People of all ages can get glaucoma. There are different types of glaucoma, but they all involve damage to the optic nerve, the nerve of sight, which is at the back of the eye.

Glaucoma is not curable. If you have glaucoma it must be monitored for the rest of your life.

A family history of glaucoma means you are at much greater risk of developing glaucoma. Current treatments for glaucoma aim to lower eye pressure.

Medication in eye drops can have side effects on other parts of your body. Tell your eye specialist if you notice any change in your general well-being since you started the eye drops.

If you have glaucoma tell your relatives, especially those close relatives like sisters, brothers and adult children. They have an increased risk of developing glaucoma so advise them to have an eye examination.

Glaucoma NZ is a registered charitable trust and receives no government funding. We rely solely on donations, sponsorship, grants and fundraising.

All the information available to you from Glaucoma NZ is free. To donate please go to donation coupon on the back page of the Eyelights newsletter. To donate online visit www.glaucoma.org.nz

The Entertainment™ Book is a restaurant and activity guide that provides hundreds of 25-50% off, and 2-for-1 offers from popular restaurants, cafes, cinemas, hotel accommodation and attractions throughout Auckland, Whangarei and Bay of Islands / Waikato and Bay of Plenty / Wellington and Manawatu / Christchurch, Canterbury and Nelson / Dunedin, Invercargill, Queenstown and surrounds, as well as Australia. Glaucoma NZ receives a donation from every book sold.

Order your Entertainment Book now and not only will you receive over $15,000 in valuable offers, valid to 1st June 2019, but you will also help raise vital funds for the ongoing work of Glaucoma NZ.

To purchase your Entertainment Book, including Digital Membership which allows you to redeem offers directly from your iPhone or Android smartphone visit, www.entertainmentbook.co.nz/orderbooks/102253y or phone 0800 452 826.
I was referred to the clinic at the Auckland Medical School for further tests and was stunned to hear I had glaucoma in both eyes. I have no family history of this.

I was referred to Mark Donaldson at Eye Doctors at Ascot Hospital, who outlined a plan of action after giving me an extremely full and clear explanation of the type of glaucoma I had (open angle). I immediately began drops and this was followed by cataract operations on both eyes, two laser treatments, and in August 2017 a Xen gel implant in my right eye, a fairly new procedure.

It has been a journey of challenge and discovery. There were down times as I realised that glaucoma cannot be cured. When I first began drops I got more on my cheeks than in my eyes! When reading I recognised the loss of lines on the page. As someone who has valued good health, diet and fitness, this was a new and daunting challenge to accept the situation.

Where there are downs there are always ups. I have found a wonderful specialist whom I have the utmost confidence in. Regular tests and follow-ups are always available as well as access to treatments easily obtained. Regularly receiving information from Glaucoma New Zealand in the way of newsletters and attending seminars is valuable. And reassurance that with continued professional monitoring and determination to do all I can myself will help me remain positive about living with glaucoma and preserving what sight I have left.

I am aware that promoting awareness in the public is so important and I have talked to many people about my situation. Glaucoma New Zealand plays a huge part in awareness of glaucoma in New Zealand and I look forward to supporting them with their objectives.”

Support Groups

We are pleased to announce that we have launched support groups in the following areas: Auckland Central, Christchurch, New Plymouth and Tauranga.

Being diagnosed with glaucoma can be daunting, especially if there’s vision loss due to advanced glaucoma or the need for urgent glaucoma surgery. It can be daunting for family members too.

We have received feedback that the groups have provided “a place to ask questions in a non-judgemental environment” and “I learn more about glaucoma and get to hear from others who are experiencing the same challenges of living with this eye disease”.

It’s our hope that we can grow our support groups around New Zealand so they are available to people of all ages and stages of glaucoma.

If you would like to find more information about the location and time of the groups or to enquire about a group being started in your area please call us on 0800 452 826 or email us at info@glaucoma.org.nz
**Public Mail box**

**QU: “I have had glaucoma for many years and now it seems I am developing cataracts. Can I have cataract surgery if I have glaucoma?”**

Yes you can still have successful cataract surgery if you have glaucoma. Your eye surgeon will monitor your eye pressure carefully after the surgery. If may be temporarily elevated soon after the operation. In the longer term some glaucoma patients even experience a reduction in intra-ocular pressure following cataract surgery. However it is better to have cataract surgery well before having glaucoma drainage surgery!

**QU: “Why does Glaucoma NZ recommend eye examinations only every five years from age 45? I have read other recommendations suggesting every two years.”**

Glaucoma ‘screening’ is a complex matter – it’s not a case of ‘one size fits all’. Glaucoma NZ has set a realistic, achievable target in the ‘45 plus 5 glaucoma eye examination’. Everyone by 45 years of age and every five years thereafter needs an eye examination because there is no other way to assess glaucoma. If everyone had an eye examination five yearly between 45 – 60 years, then in addition to earlier diagnosis when glaucoma is present, people at higher risk would be identified and monitored more closely. It would be counter-productive in terms of public acceptance and private resources to recommend frequent testing to those with no risk factors at all except increasing age.

Glaucoma NZ places emphasis on assessing the risk factors for glaucoma when you have an eye examination. You will be aware of some risk factors yourself such as having a close relative with glaucoma. However, several important risk factors, such as the shape of the angle, the state of the optic disc and the level of intra-ocular pressure can only be identified by an eye examination. At the first eye check your eye health professional should assess your level of risk and tell you how often you need to be examined and why.

Please call Glaucoma NZ on 0800 452 826 or email us at info@glaucoma.org.nz if you have any questions on glaucoma or would like to see your question published.
Glaucoma Public Meetings for 2018

Public meetings provide awareness and education on Glaucoma not just for you but also your friends and family – so please extend the invitation. We have the following meetings booked for 2018.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>GUEST SPEAKER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sat 7 April</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>Quality Hotel Lincoln Green, 159 Lincoln Road</td>
<td>Dr Dean Conger</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Henderson, <strong>West Auckland</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun 6 May</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>Distinction Hamilton Hotel 100 Garnett Avenue,</td>
<td>Dr Ben Hoy</td>
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<td>Te Rapa, <strong>Hamilton</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 26 May</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>St Andrews Anglican Church Lounge 91 Titirua</td>
<td>Ross Gordon</td>
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<td>penga Street, <strong>Taupo</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 23 June</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>Steeple Conference Centre, 100 Fitzherbert Ave,</td>
<td>Dr Richard Holmes</td>
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<td>West End, <strong>Palmerston North</strong></td>
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<td>Sat 14 July</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>Alexandra Park Conference Centre Greenlane West,</td>
<td>Dr Mark Donaldson</td>
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<td>Gate B, Level 3 <strong>Central Auckland</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 4 Aug</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>Howick Library, Fencible Lounge 25 Uxbridge</td>
<td>Dr Sonya Bennett</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Road, Howick, <strong>East Auckland</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 22 Sept</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>Admirals Motor Lodge, 161 Middle Renwick Rd,</td>
<td>Martyn Crossley</td>
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<td>Springlands, <strong>Blenheim</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 6 Oct</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>Commodore Airport Hotel, 449 Memorial Ave,</td>
<td>Dr Allan Simpson</td>
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<td>Burnside, <strong>Christchurch</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun 7 Oct</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>Trailways Hotel, Rivers Conference Room 66</td>
<td>Dr Antony Suter</td>
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<td>Trafalgar Street, <strong>Nelson</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 10 Nov</td>
<td>10am</td>
<td>East Bay Reap, Whakaari Room 21 Pyne Street,</td>
<td>Dr Andrew Thompson</td>
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An invitation will be sent out closer to the time of the event or visit www.glaucoma.org.nz to keep up with any updates.

We would like to acknowledge the unpaid generosity of time our guest speakers donate to Glaucoma NZ annually for the aim to further awareness on glaucoma in their local communities.

We would also like to thank the Freemasons Foundation for their kind donation which has enabled us to continue our public meetings for 2018.
Community Fundraising

Round the Bays 2018

A huge thank you to Dr Jim Stewart and his wife Rosalind, the team at Specsavers Pakuranga and the team at Invacare NZ for your fundraising support and awareness of Glaucoma at Round the Bays 2018!

Happy 50th Birthday to Jan Thompson

Optometrist Jan Thompson celebrated her 50th Birthday in style and asked all her friends and family to provide a donation to her two chosen charities of which Glaucoma NZ was one. Thanks to Jan’s family and friends Jan raised $1000 for Glaucoma New Zealand! Here’s to many more milestone birthdays.

Help Us Save Paper!

We now have the option of sending our newsletter to you via email. If you would prefer your newsletter via email please let us know by emailing us at info@glaucoma.org.nz or phoning us on 0800 452 826 and providing us with your full name and email address.

In Memoriam

We acknowledge with gratitude bequests in loving memory of:

- Estate of the late Hermione McLachlan
- Estate of the late Jean Weastell
- Estate of the late Betty Bissett McGrevy
- Estate of the late John Goulding

Glaucoma NZ relies on the generous donations from the public and local fundraising. If you or your local group or business would like to do a fundraiser for Glaucoma NZ please contact us at info@glaucoma.org.nz
We need your help!

We would like to thank those who are ongoing givers to GNZ and have supported us throughout the years. Without you the sight saving work of GNZ would not exist.

91,000 in NZ are now estimated to have Glaucoma and 50% of them don’t know they have it as glaucoma has no immediate symptoms. With a growing and aging population this number is predicted to increase.

Glaucoma NZ has a vision to further education and awareness and set up further initiatives but to do this we need your help.

We are looking for people who are willing to become regular givers and donate to us on either a weekly, monthly, or bi monthly basis. You can do this by completing the form opposite.

Your regular donation will:
• Expand our support groups nationwide
• Continue to expand our Community Education & Awareness Programme nationally
• Continue to develop and print free resources to those with Glaucoma and their friends and family
• Send out new members packs

We simply can’t do what we do without you! Thank you for your support.

Bequests

Have you thought about leaving a gift to support the future work of GNZ and its aim to reduce the incidence and impact of glaucoma in New Zealand?

Contact us to find out more on info@glaucoma.org.nz or call 0800 452 826