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HEALTH MATTERS

Dangers of Lasik Surgery Revealed

Health officials investigate

(AP) — A decade after Lasik eye surgery hit the market, patients left with fuzzy instead of clear vision are airing their grievances before federal health officials.

Make no mistake: Most Lasik recipients do walk away with crisper vision, some better than 20/20.

But not everyone's a good candidate, and an unlucky few do suffer life-changing side effects: poor vision, painful dry eyes, glare or problems seeing at night.

How big are the risks? The Food and Drug Administration thinks about 5 percent of patients are dissatisfied with Lasik. How many struggle daily with side effects? How many are just unhappy that they couldn't completely ditch their glasses? The range of effects on patients' quality of life is a big unknown.

So with a public hearing Friday,



A doctor uses a laser to flatten the cornea of a patient. A decade after Lasik eye surgery hit the market, patients left with fuzzy instead of clear vision are airing their grievances before federal health officials. (AP Photo)

the FDA is beginning a new effort to determine if warnings about Lasik's risks are appropriate. The agency also is pairing with eye surgeons for a major study expected to enroll hundreds of Lasik patients

to better understand who has bad outcomes and exactly what their complaints are.

"Clearly there is a group who are not satisfied and do not get the kind of results they expect," FDA medi-


cal device chief Dr. Daniel Schultz said Thursday. The study should "help us predict who those patients might be before they have the procedure."

About 7.6 million Americans have undergone some form of laser vision correction, including the \$2,000-per-eye Lasik. Lasik is quick and, if no problems occur, painless: Doctors cut a flap in the cornea — the clear covering of the eye — and aim a laser underneath it and zap to reshape the cornea for sharper sight.


The vast majority of patients, 95 percent, see better and are happy they had Lasik, said Dr. Kerry Solomon of the Medical University of South Carolina, who led a review of Lasik's safety for the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery.

But doctors advise against Lasik for one in four people who seek the surgery. Their pupils may be too large or corneas too thin or they may have some other condition that can increase the risk of a poor outcome.

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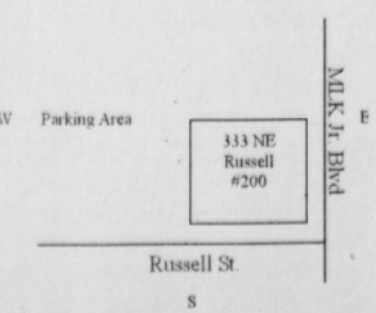
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Emergency Department Visits Surge

Cuts to the Oregon Health Plan led to a 20 percent increase in emergency-department visits and nearly 50 percent increase in hospital admissions of uninsured patients.

The figures were gathered from visits to Oregon emergency departments during the 24

months before and after the Oregon Health Plan cuts in February and March 2003.

Overall, uncompensated care for Oregon hospitals rose from \$256 million in 2002 (before the OHP cuts) to \$509 million in 2004 (after the OHP cuts), according to research by the Office

for Oregon Health Policy Research.

Dr. Robert A. Lowe, associate professor of emergency medicine in the OHSU School of Medicine, said cost-cutting measures may have substantial and lasting impacts on the health care system, and more importantly on its

most vulnerable patients.

"As policymakers contemplate fundamental changes to Medicaid programs nationwide, these events in Oregon should provide a warning about a potential large increase in emergency department use by the uninsured in the United States," Lowe said.

HEALTH WATCH

Oregon Action Internships -- The grassroots organization Oregon Action is seeking an intern who is committed to improving healthcare for non-English speaking patients in northeast Portland. This is a non-paid internship with college credit availability. Call 503-828-6588 ext. 5.

Groovin' a New Weight -- Wednesdays beginning April 30, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.; join the weight program designed for women only, this eight-week program guarantees an energy boost, education and support for a \$180 fee. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Concordia Wellness Street Fair -- Saturday, May 3, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Northeast 30th and Killingsworth, this free family event will feature acupuncture, a baby boot camp, massages, a Tai Chi class and more.

Childbirth Preparation Class -- Fridays, starting May 2, from 7 to 9 p.m., this four-week class will help first-time parents prepare for labor and delivery through practice and education; the series costs \$85 per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Stop Smoking! -- Thursdays, starting May 8 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., a four-week, quit-smoking program

offers the tools to for real success minimize the risk of relapse; \$95 fee. To register, call 503-335-3500.

Women's Wellness -- Breast Health -- Saturday, May 10, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Legacy Good Samaritan, Building Two-lower level, 1040 N.W. 22nd Ave., this free event features a catered brunch, guest speakers and booths with topics that include cancer genetics, breast imaging, bone density and more. To register, call 503-335-3500.

Newborn Care for Multiples -- Saturday, May 11 from 1 to 5 p.m., this class will prepare new parents coping skills and routines to deal with multiples. The session costs \$45 per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Feeding for Multiples -- Sunday, May 11 from 5 to 8 p.m., this class is designed to cover the basics of breast and bottle feeding multiples; class costs \$40 per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Josiah Hill III Clinic's Annual Leaving a Legacy -- Thursday, May 15, the fund raiser featuring a social and silent auction from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. and the dinner program with keynote speaker Charles Jordan from 6:45 to 8:30 p.m.; funds will benefit the clinic in support of those who suffer from lead poisoning. RSVP by calling 503-334-9694.

Ready or Not? -- Thursday, May 28, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.; learn how

to prepare your family for a major disaster strike; federal assistance could take up to 72 hours before being available; would your family be ready? This free class will prepare your family to survive with self-sufficiency for the first few days. To register, call 503-335-3500.

Peer-to-Peer Recovery -- Peer-to-peer education recovery course is a free, nine-week course on the topic of recovery for any person with a serious mental illness. The courses are led by mentors who are recovering from mental illness and are trained to teach coping strategies to others. For more information, call 503-228-5692.

Bereavement Support Groups -- Free, safe confidential group meetings for those who have experienced the death of a loved one offered on various nights and locations. For information and registration, call 503-215-4622.

Parenting Classes -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For a schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit: providence.org/classes.

Cancer Resource Center -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer.

The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Stroke Alert Screening -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

Smoke-Free Support Group -- meets Mondays, 7 to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

Free Body Basics -- This physician-recommended class is appropriate for all ages and health conditions. Plan to attend this one-session class for the simple guidelines to safe exercise, including stretching. Call 503-256-4000 to register.

Osteoporosis Screening -- An ultrasound bone-density screening with personalized education; fee \$30. To schedule an appointment, call 503-261-6611.

Mammography Screening -- Early detection is a key factor in the prevention of breast cancer. Call 503-251-6137 to schedule your high-tech, soft-touch mammogram.

Managing Chronic Hepatitis C -- Third Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m., the informative session led by a registered nurse to help manage side effects of medications and dosage preparations and administration; doctors referral required. To register, call 503-251-6313.

Maternity Water Workout -- Helping new moms regain muscle tone, strength and flexibility, all in the support and freedom of the water. Call 503-256-4000 for information.

Tips to Survive a Stroke

Knowing signs and seeking help is vital

It is the third-leading cause of death in America and the No. 1 cause of adult disability. Stroke strikes nearly 750,000 Americans

each year—killing an estimated 170,000 people. But 80 percent of strokes are preventable.

The sooner you recognize the signs you or someone you know is having a stroke, the faster you seek medical help, the better the chance of survival. That's even more important here in Oregon, where the stroke death rate is the fifth highest

in the country.

Most people don't know the signs of a stroke. Even if someone knows they are having a stroke, they might not be able to communicate that. That's why the National Stroke Association developed the FAST test to educate people about the importance of recognizing the signs of a stroke.

- **F** – Face: Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the mouth or face droop?
- **A** – Arms: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward? Can one arm not be raised?
- **S** – Speech: Ask the person to repeat a sentence. Can they repeat it correctly? Do they slur the words?
- **T** – Time: If the person exhibits any problems with these, it's time to call for emergency help.

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