

HEALTH MATTERS

Eye Surgeon Gives Back

Helping patients in need

Dr. Martin J. Balish, a board certified ophthalmologist at Oregon Eye Specialists in Portland recently partnered with other medical professions for "Mission Cataract Day" to provide six pre-screened and pre-qualified individuals with cataract surgery.

"They were all in a category of 'complex surgeries and with varying levels of difficulty. However,

I am very pleased with the success and happy we were able to not only give them clearer vision, but also the great possibility to see without glasses," Dr. Balish said.

One of the recipients, Eileen Oster, 63, stated a few days after surgery: "Everything is brighter! I definitely see a difference between my regular cataract lens and the new (Crystalens). This lens is more than I could've ever hoped for!"

Participating Lions Clubs and

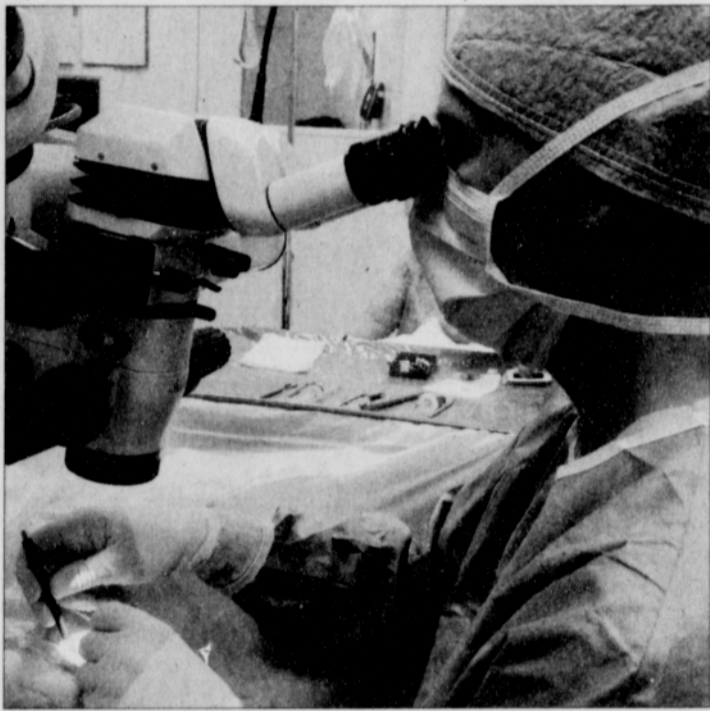
the Oregon Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation helped to identify the individuals in need of cataract surgeries, and then team them with an ophthalmologist to perform the surgery.

Dr. Balish, anesthesiologist Dr. Tod Tolan, and nurses donated their time, and the Westside Surgery Center in Tigard donated the equipment. Bausch and Lomb donated all of the cutting-edge Crystalens, a product which revolutionized cataract surgery five years ago.

The retail price for each lens alone is \$1,195. This procedure is considered a premium lens implant; private insurance does not cover it. The total average cost for each surgery is between \$4,700 - \$5,700 - a cost prohibitive amount for the selected individuals whose income falls below 150 percent the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

Dr. Balish said he is committed to making a difference in our community when cataracts are preventing the less fortunate from seeing clearly.

"So many eye doctors are doing mission work in other countries... I feel more can be done at home. I hope to be able to bring the latest technological advance in eye surgery to those who are most in need and don't have the means to pay for it. My goal is to be a regular participant in this program."



Dr. Martin J. Balish performs cataract surgery as part of a public service campaign with the Oregon Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation and other partners.

Risks from Plastic Toxin Debated

Advice is to lower exposure

(AP) -- With scientists at odds about the risks of a chemical found in plastic baby bottles, metal cans and other food packaging, the government last week gave consumers some tips on how to reduce their exposure to BPA even as it said the substance is safe.

A Food and Drug Administration advisory committee met as a major study linked bisphenol A to possible risks of heart disease and diabetes. The scientific debate could drag on for years.

"Right now, our tentative conclusion is that it's safe, so we're not recommending any change in habits," said Laura Tarantino, head of the FDA's office of food additive safety. But she acknowledged, "there



A nurse prepares a bottle of donated milk for a baby.

are a number of things people can do to lower their exposure."

For example, consumers can avoid plastic containers imprinted with the recycling number '7,' as many of those contain BPA. Or, Tarantino said, they can avoid warming food in such containers, as heat helps to release the chemical.

More than 90 percent of Americans have traces of BPA in their bodies, but the FDA says the levels of exposure are too low to pose a health risk, even for infants and children. Other scientists, however, say BPA has been shown to affect the human body even at very low levels.

Fewer School Nurses Help Kids

A new report from the Task Force on School Nurses finds that Oregon faces a severe shortage of school nurses, which poses a serious health risk for school children throughout the state.

Oregon is currently ranked 49th in the nation for school nurse-to-student ratio. A survey of Oregon school districts conducted by the Task Force shows

that 54 school districts, representing over 21,000 students, have no access to school nursing services.

As a consequence, thousands of children with asthma, attention-deficit disorder, food allergies and other increasingly prevalent health problems must rely on teachers, other school staffers or the telephone. Unlicensed staff members are forced to dispense

medication, treat injuries, diagnose illnesses and handle emergencies.

Compounding the decrease in school nursing is the fact that the number of children with chronic illnesses and/or special health care needs has increased dramatically over the past decade.

Rep. Tina Kotek of north Portland and other lawmakers plan to address the issue in next year's Legislature.

Free Cervical Cancer Screening

The OHSU Center for Women's Health will offer free Pap tests, clinical breast exams, and basic health screenings on Friday, Oct. 3, from 4 p.m. - 8 p.m. at the OHSU Center for Women's Health, located on the 7th floor of

the Peter O. Kohler Pavilion on the OHSU Marquam Hill Campus. The screenings identify changes in your body when there are often no symptoms to warn you that something is wrong. Women who have experienced

barriers in being able to receive Pap test are encouraged to make an appointment in advance by calling 503-346-1212. A basic health screenings as part of the Health Education Fair do not require appointments.

Leukemia Walk -- A Light the Night Walk for the fight against Leukemia will be held Friday, Oct. 3 at the World Trade Center Plaza, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Pre-walk festivities will begin at 6 p.m. with your choice of a 1.8 mile or 3 mile loop beginning at 7:30 p.m. Sign up for free registration with Team Regence at teams.lightthenight.org.

Prostate Cancer Golf Challenge -- A round of golf for prostate cancer research will take place Monday, Sept. 29 at Columbia Edgewater Country Club, 2220 N.E. Marine Dr. Registration begins at 11 a.m. with play beginning at 1 p.m. To register and learn more, call Sally Lucy at 503-515-6474 or visit pcchallengegolf.com.

Cardiac-Rehab Exercise Classes -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

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

Powerful Tools for Caregivers -- A 6-week educational series designed to help family caregivers take care of themselves while caring for a relative or friend with a chronic illness. For updated schedules, call 503-413-8018.

Expectant Couples, New Parents -- Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital offers the workshop Lasting Relationships for New Parents, helping couples keep their relationships strong and happy in the transition to parenthood. Presented by Northwest Family Services, upcoming sessions are scheduled Oct. 11 and Oct. 18. To register, visit lastingrelationships.org.

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.

HEALTH WATCH

Chronic Pain Support Group -- meets the first Wednesday at 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and the third Wednesday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

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Leg Alert Screening -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

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.

Hospice Volunteer Training -- Providence offers a free comprehensive course of training to prepare people who are interested in becoming hospice volunteers. No previous experience is required. For more information or to request an application packet, call Melinda Smith, hospice volunteer coordinator, at 503-215-5774.

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.

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.

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