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The truth about LASIK

FDA panel discusses patients' postoperative quality of life

May 15, 2008

By: [Christina Phillis](#)

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All in favor

Leaders in the field of ophthalmology presented stories of their own experiences with LASIK. Kerry D. Solomon, MD, professor of ophthalmology, Medical University of South Carolina, gave data from the "LASIK World Literature Review: Quality of Life and Patient Satisfaction," a meta-analysis examining approximately 3,000 peer-reviewed articles published over the past 10 years in clinical journals from around the world, including North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia.

Nineteen studies representing 2,200 patients were searched directly for satisfaction results. The rate of satisfaction found globally was 95.4%.

An interesting point about the study was that LASIK was seen in a variety of ways and had close to the same rate of success, Dr. Solomon told *Ophthalmology Times*.

"We looked at those patients who were treated when LASIK first became

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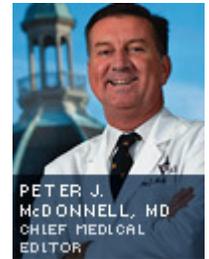
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available in the early 1990s. We wanted to see if the satisfaction rate in LASIK at that time was any different from modern LASIK, and the truth is it has been consistently high all along," said Dr. Solomon. "Greater than 95% of patients, since the inception of LASIK, have been happy with their results."

Dr. Solomon even looked at satisfaction among patients from 6 months after surgery to 1 to 2 years after surgery and found no real difference. "If anything, patients who were further from their LASIK surgery tended to be more satisfied (roughly 96% to 98%). That might be because they have had time to have a touch up or enhancement. Or, as we all know, the symptoms of dry eye tend to get better over time," Dr. Solomon said.

Dry eye

One of the more common side effects after LASIK is dry eye. Testimonies from the public relayed that its symptoms can be unbearable and can cause much pain. It was one of the reasons Dorian listed in his suicide letter. Eric Donnenfeld, MD, New York University clinical professor and one of the original FDA investigators of the excimer laser, presented information on dry eye after LASIK that the LASIK task force obtained from 46 peer-reviewed articles representing 32,000 eyes. According to the results of this research, 32% of patients had dry eye before LASIK, and 35% had dry eye after the procedure.

"The majority of patients have complete resolution of their dry eye over a 2- to 4-week period following surgery. Severe dry eye after LASIK is extremely rare," Dr. Donnenfeld said. He also noted that the risk of infection over a lifetime is more than 100 times greater with contact lenses than with LASIK.

"The majority of our patients have less glare and halo after LASIK than before," Dr. Donnenfeld said.

Military perspective

Presenting the military perspective of the value of LASIK was David J. Tanzer, MD, Naval Medical Center, San Diego.

Dr. Tanzer emphasized that the military has a unique set of visual demands that comes with jumping out of planes, using scopes on weapons, and landing aircraft on an aircraft carrier deck in the dark.

With that set of demands comes the necessity to be able to work and operate without visual obstructions. The Department of Defense, therefore, initiated the laser vision correction war fighter program and has treated more than 224,000 eyes.

Dr. Tanzer presented the results from the latest study with 30 class II aviators from the Navy and Marine Corps, 24 men and six women. Researchers found that 95% of patients had 20/20 visual acuity after 2 weeks. Out of the 30 patients, 95% reported that the procedure helped their abilities as a naval aviator, and 100% said they would recommend it to a fellow aviator.

"We appreciate that, due to the improvements in laser vision correction, we can improve the visual function of our fighting force and actually lower the



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risk of casualties because they don't need glasses or contacts," Dr. Tanzer said.

"The military offers a totally independent evaluation of LASIK," Steven C. Schallhorn, MD, said. "They're not driven by industry. They're not driven by the need to sell a procedure."

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