

NEWSLETTER

**In this Issue:**

- Dr. Garrett's mission trip to Kenya
- Lasik? Just say No!



## Healing Physical and Spiritual Blindness On the East coast of Africa: Dr. Garrett's Summer Mission and Gift of Sight.

Of the estimated 1.4 million children worldwide who are blind, 320,000 of them live in sub-Saharan Africa. Not only is the economic burden of global blindness high, but eye diseases such as cataracts, trachoma, and glaucoma that are easily treated in developed countries can and do result in blindness and even death in third world nations.

This summer, Virginia Beach Eye Center ophthalmologist Dr. Samuel Garrett and his family traveled to Mombasa, Kenya where he served as a medical missionary and eye surgeon to the poor in a program run by the Lighthouse for Christ Mission. Their mission: healing physical and spiritual blindness. Dr. Garrett joined other ophthalmologists at the Lighthouse Centre and at community mobile outreach clinics which perform over 2,000 eye surgeries and dispense nearly 3,000 pairs of eye-glasses annually.



Aided by contributions from patients at Virginia Beach Eye Center and his church family at Baylake United Methodist, Virginia Beach, Dr. Garrett brought with him a new ICare tonometer and other ophthalmic equipment and supplies that he used to check eye pressure for glaucoma. In the blink of an eye, this simple, fast, accurate and portable device will help save the sight of thousands in Kenya.

Throughout his trip, Dr. Garrett sent home blogs detailing his experiences and impressions. Now these blogs are posted at [www.vbeye.com](http://www.vbeye.com) and make for fascinating reading. Here are some excerpts:

**Day One Of Our Mission**

*This afternoon I saw patients in the "free" clinic where some patients pay about \$4 to be seen and most pay nothing. These patients are seen 3-4 at a time in a smallish room where 4 examination stations are separated by some plywood walls and curtains separating them from the other patients lined up along the wall in chairs waiting for their turns.*

*I performed my first cataract surgery today and all went well, but it was challenging due to everything being so much different, and the equipment being somewhat outdated. I spent more time than usual counseling the patients that I examined in the afternoon to help explain their eye problems, and it was gratifying to see how much they appreciated some extra attention even in a free clinic situation.*



Virginia Beach Eye Center, a state-licensed, Medicare-certified, AAHHC-accredited ambulatory surgery center specializes in the latest vision technology and offers primary comprehensive, state-of-the-art eye care services including testing, diagnosis, and treatment for diseases of the eye; laser vision correction, refractive lens exchange, cataract surgery, and other ophthalmic procedures using the most advanced techniques. The center also provides optometry and optician services.

We've sent you this issue because our records show you are or have been a patient in our office. To receive this newsletter by e-mail, sign up at [www.vbeye.com](http://www.vbeye.com). If you would prefer not to receive future issues, please let us know, 757.481.5555.



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# Lasik? Just Say No!

Why would you want a permanent flap cut in your cornea with a blade or laser (which will never fully re-attach) when you can have NuSite<sup>®</sup> Advanced Surface Ablation? NuSite<sup>®</sup> offers the same life changing visual outcomes as LASIK without the risk of multiple complications associated with cutting a corneal flap.

Did you know that Congress recently held hearings into the problems associated with LASIK? A recent Newsweek article emphasized the safety of surface laser treatments like NuSite<sup>®</sup> and ophthalmic industry reports now indicate that LASIK volume is down in the U.S. but surface procedures, like NuSite<sup>®</sup>, are up.

Dr. Samuel Garrett has performed thousands of refractive and microsurgical procedures, most recently NuSite<sup>®</sup> Advanced Surface Ablation. Dr. Garrett became a big proponent of surface ablation a few years ago when the technique evolved, allowing comfort equal to LASIK with the same high quality visual results. Dr. Garrett asks, "Laser vision correction is a 'rest of your life' issue, so why not do the safest procedure for your eyes when

the comfort and quality outcomes are the same?" He also notes, "Even years after the procedure, LASIK patients often have visible scars in the cornea, whereas NuSite<sup>®</sup> patients almost never have visible evidence of their procedure."

**BENEFITS OF LASER VISION CORRECTION**

- Actual procedure is brief, just a few minutes for each eye
- Speedy results, visual improvement noted very quickly in the days following surgery
- Reduce or eliminate dependency on glasses or contact lenses
- General improvement in overall quality of life, enjoyably participate in a variety of activities at home, work, or leisure

**CORNEAL COMPLICATIONS AVOIDED OR REDUCED BY CHOOSING NUSITE INSTEAD OF LASIK**

- Partial Flap
- Thin Flap
- Buttonhole Flap
- Complete Flap (cap)
- Irregular Flap
- Macrostromiae (folds)
- Microstromiae (wrinkles)
- Diffuse Lamellar Keratitis
- Epithelial In-growth
- Dislodged Flap (trauma)
- Iatrogenic Keratoconus (progressive corneal thinning caused by LASIK)

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Continued from page 1

**Interesting Cases**

We had an extremely busy day and I saw so much serious pathology, such as eye cancers, perforated corneas, glaucomatous blindness, bad injuries, etc. The sad part is that resources are so limited here, that many bad conditions which would normally be remedied in the U.S are simply not treated here, or the treatment is only designed to save the eye, not necessarily restore vision... It's very frustrating to not have exactly what I need when I want/need it, since I have built my practice to have those resources always available.



**Limited Resources But A Sufficiency of Grace**

The poor people I am seeing seem to more readily accept that things don't always work out perfectly or for the best. I haven't seen one complain if we are not able to fix their eye or vision.

I saw several interesting patients today, including an old Ethiopian farmer (with an absolutely gorgeous family) who was injured in the left eye years ago when the whip he was using to drive the ox powered plow caught him in the eye.



He was losing his vision in his remaining good eye and a simple pair of glasses was all he needed. I saw another man with an inoperable brain tumor who had lost his vision in his left eye due to un-operated retinal detachment. He now has complete drooping of his right eyelid due to the tumor and cannot open his eye. So he devised an old ragged headband into a strap to hold his eye open. Unfortunately, the tumor has also ruined the nerve that controls sensation to the face and eye, and has caused a central non-healing corneal ulcer in his only seeing eye. His only hope in saving the eye is to keep the eye shut all the time, and then of course he can't see!! I wonder whether we could have done something more for him if he was in the U.S.



**Mobile Eye Clinic Sees 52 Patients**

Yesterday we traveled 3 hours North by Land Cruiser toward Somalia and went to a school originally funded by German philanthropists and run by the government. It looked to be about 200 children.

We set up our mobile eye clinic in an open air school room and ended up seeing 52 patients during our stay... Nancy checked vision and took a brief history, then I saw the patient, examined



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their eyes with a high power light source and spectacle mounted telescopes, then checked their eye pressure with the Icare tonometer (which worked great)... When the clinic was over we sent three patients by bus back to the eye center in Mombasa for cataract surgery the next day. We then donated 10 soccer balls (donated by friends, family, and the great people at BUMC) to the school and were treated as a thank you to a lively soccer "football" game played on a huge dirt field near the school.



**Successful Surgeries, Stoic Patients**

Today, I performed laser surgery on one patient for diabetic retinopathy, and operated on 5 patients for cataract surgery (3 for the eye camp). Two of the cases were extremely difficult secondary to the longstanding and hard nature of the cataracts with the patients both being bilaterally blind. The surgeries were successful however and the patients should have good vision again tomorrow when they remove their bandages. One of the 5 cataract patients was only 15 years old and I marveled at how he allowed me to inject local anesthetic behind his eye with him completely awake and unsedated. None of the patients moved a muscle or made a sound during the operations or the anesthetic injection (a note for the faint of heart—we don't use injection anesthetic for cataract surgery in the U.S., just drops, and we do give sedation!!). They all apparently have a very stoic nature when it comes to enduring pain or a procedure.

**Life-Changing Experience**

We've had a wonderful and life changing experience here in Kenya. We have spread some joy by giving out soccer balls to kids at schools, churches and eye camps, some of whom have never seen a ball, or others who have only played with a homemade ball made out of rags. We have given some of the staff a break by performing many different tasks around the eye center. We have given sight back to patients who were blind from cataracts for many years. We have, through the generosity of the people of Baylake United Methodist Church and the patients of Virginia Beach Eye Center, provided desperately needed eye equipment to examine patients at the rural eye camps.

Nancy, Allison and I have all decided that this was definitely one of the best things that we have ever done and would all like to come back some day. We'll see everyone back home. Hakuna matata!!

(To read more visit [www.vbeye.com](http://www.vbeye.com))

