

A photograph of a cave entrance leading to a beach and ocean. The cave walls are dark and textured, with a large opening on the right side. Through the opening, a bright blue sky, a clear turquoise ocean, and a sandy beach are visible. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The Harman Eye Clinic
presents:

Cataract Surgery, A Patient's Journal

Joyce Bowley

Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal

Arlington, Washington — Joyce Bowley joined The Harman Eye Clinic in 1995. Patients have happily passed through our surgery center under her warm, professional guidance. Now Joyce has discovered that cataracts have affected her lifestyle. By writing her experience as it unfolds, it is her hope that she can reach out to those who are undecided and yet concerned about their vision impacting daily life activities.



Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal



Joyce Bowley, ASC Patient Surgery
Coordination

Cataract surgery. When I was growing up in the 60's, I don't remember hearing about it all that much, but I do remember "old" people with thick, coke-bottle glasses. If asked, they would tell you they'd had eye surgery and it was quite a big deal: in the hospital, sand bags to immobilize their head, no bending over or lifting. Surgery was a big deal.

Now, here we are 50 years later. So many changes. Cataract surgery is now an outpatient procedure. Clear Cornea surgery means smaller incisions & easier recovery. Intraocular implants mean no coke-bottle glasses and now can offer correction for astigmatism and provide multifocal lenses.

I've been a witness to many of these advancements during the last 22 years working with the Surgeons at The Harman Eye Clinic. .

Recently, I've started to notice that lights aren't bright enough while I do hand sewing on my quilts. I've found myself avoiding driving at night because oncoming headlights almost blind me. (When you start and stop your work day in the dark, that's a challenge!). When I looked at lights, they all had a starburst effect. A couple times during the day the sun would hit just right and I'd be momentarily blinded.

So, time for my eye exam! I've had "baby" cataracts for a few years. I'm only 61, but I've seen many, many patients my age and younger coming in for surgery. So the possibility of qualifying for surgery was the only concern. Well, turns out I did.

So now I'm on the schedule for both surgeries. I'm thrilled that I'll be able to have the Tecnis Symphony lens implant. This will allow me to be less dependent on glasses, probably only needing readers to see fine print.

Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal

My hobbies are sewing, genealogy and reading. I've also been seen driving around Washington State with my camera, photographing the fantastic scenery, flowers, wildlife and quirky things that catch my eye. My job is computer work and face to face. The ability to do all this without glasses is perfect!

I'll be sharing my personal experience of surgery and the adjustment to Symphony lenses in further posts. I'm not one to put my personal life online for all to know, but this is dear to my heart with my job, that I love.

Getting ready for surgery day. I'm between the age of 60-65 with no health issues, so I was able to have the need for my MD to clear me for outpatient surgery deferred. After the schedule was set, the nurse sat and explained my pre-op instructions to me: morning meds with a sip of water, nothing to eat or drink past midnight, the need for a driver. They will start an IV, so I've got to drink lots of (hydrating) fluids the day before to ensure the best veins.

Now, since I work in the Surgery Center, I volunteered to work until it was time for me to be admitted. The only problem I can foresee is a caffeine headache when my body realizes it's not getting its daily dose. I went for years eating one meal a day, so I don't see a problem with not eating until after surgery. I certainly don't want to risk being nauseous while my eye is being worked on!

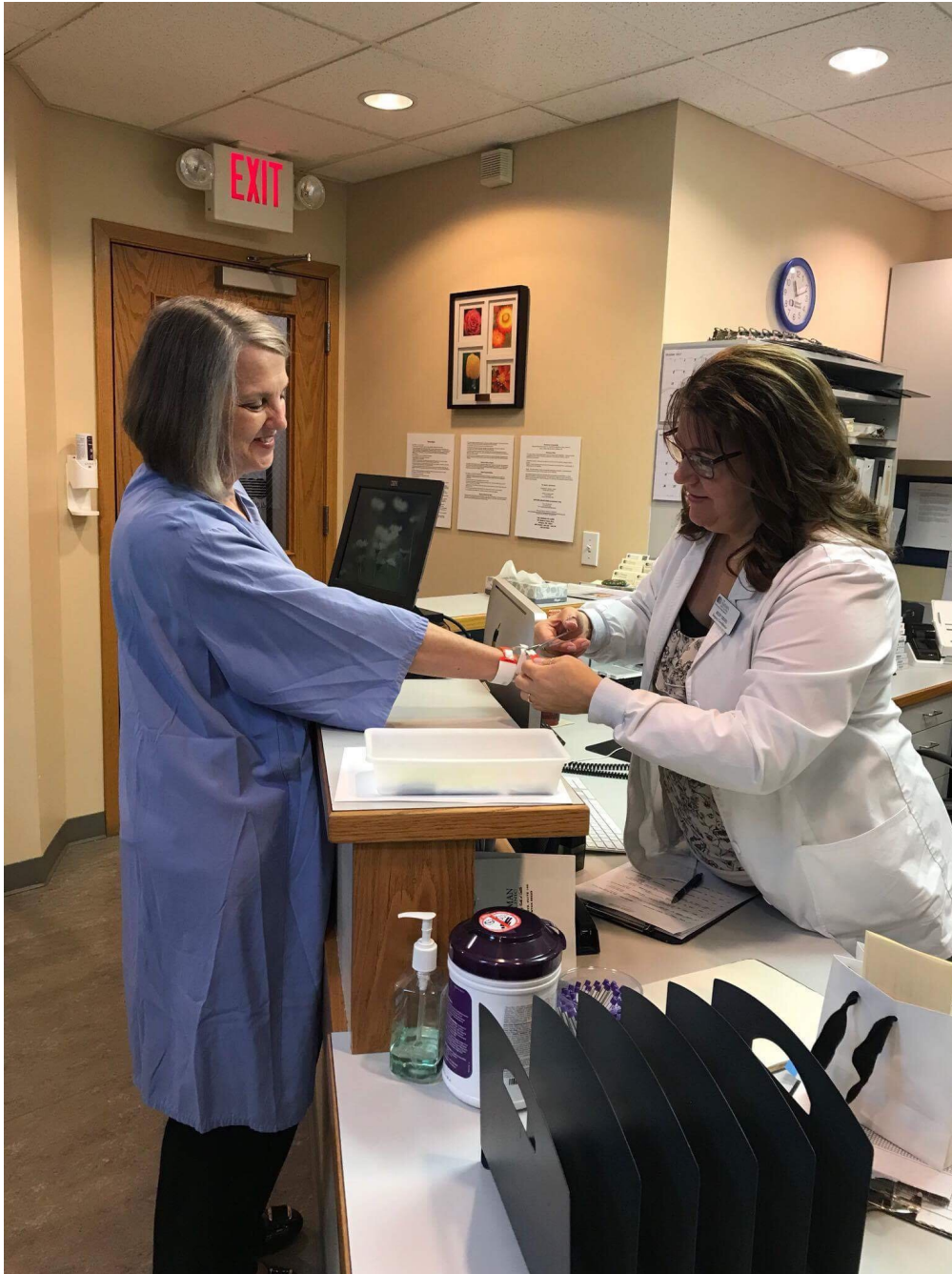
I have been approved for what's called "dropless" surgery. This means I won't have to pick up any prescriptions for a set of eye drops (antibiotic, steroid & NSAID) to use before and after surgery. Instead, the medication will be placed in the back of my eye at the time of surgery. Thank goodness! While I've figured out the best way to put drops in my eye, remembering to do so 4 times a day would probably require hiring a personal assistant!

Am I nervous about having surgery? Well, I am fortunate to know this team of surgeons and staff and be familiar with the entire process from A-Z. I have total faith in my surgeons skill. In the back of mind, I know that any surgery comes with risks and possible complications. I choose not to dwell on negatives. What would be the point? I will pray for the surgeon and his team and let God do the worrying. (This is what got me through my two children doing 8 tours with the Army in Iraq & Afghanistan without a nervous breakdown.)

My surgeon has told me I'll need to be diligent in taking care of my dry eyes. For me, the hours I spend staring at computer screens has led to dry eyes. Seems I forget to blink! I do take fish oil every day as he's recommended, which has certainly helped. But surgery will disturb the surface of my eye, so I will stock up on Preservative Free artificial tears for use after surgery. Plus, years ago I did have an injury to my left eye that has caused what is called "recurrent corneal erosion." I used to have yearly flare ups, but since I started with the fish oil I haven't had any problems. I'm aware this problem is ever present and I need to be responsible for constant care.

Other than that, I think I'm ready!

Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal



Surgery Day. Must admit, I'm a bit anxious. Tossed and turned all night.

No coffee or breakfast this morning. Just a couple meds with a sip of water. Brushed my teeth and rinsed my mouth out, being careful to not swallow any of that tasty toothpaste!

My co-workers learned I'm not as perky when I am caffeine deprived! But I took a couple Tylenol with my meds to keep the headache minimized and made it through to admission time.

Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal



The staff are fantastic! I don't think I was ever alone. Super supportive, keeping me informed of what was happening along the way. There were a bunch of eye drops that got easier each batch because there was always a numbing drop first. IV, monitors placed for heart rhythm, SAT and a blood pressure cuff. You know, surgery stuff! I was a bit chilly and a hand warmer and the heated chair were perfect. Even got a bit of a massage from the chair.

Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal



Seemed like no time at all and I was fitted with O₂ tubing and being escorted into the Operating Room. Normally there are 4 folks in the OR with a patient: the Surgeon, Anesthesia, Scrub Tech and Circulator. As I said, never alone.

Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal



There was a little shuffling around to get comfortable in the chair and after that I really don't remember much! I do remember seeing a really cool pattern (like a beautiful wallpaper), some colored lights, the surgeon saying we were going to do a final test, doing that and then being told the lens was in. Then the slight sensation of the medication being placed in my eye and we're done!

Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal

Out to the post op area with another great staff member who recorded vitals while I had a cup of coffee and a "continental breakfast." With strong vitals and me feeling good, time to disconnect the IV and head home.

Now this dropleess medicine manifests differently for everyone. For me it's like oil on top of a bowl of water being swirled around. At first it looked like mountain ranges, later it was bubbles, and even later just a patch of black dots! I was told to go home and rest in an upright position for a couple hours so that the medicine could settle to the bottom of the eye.



Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal

Headed home, noticing my eye felt a bit scratchy as the numbing wore off. Laid down with a bunch of pillows to keep my head elevated and took a short nap, woke up feeling great. My husband and I picked up our grandson and went to Taekwondo; back to normal except no driving today.

What a great experience! From checking in to checking out, the staff are very caring, friendly and professional. Yes, I work with them every day, and from a patient perspective, I'm proud to say GREAT JOB!

Tomorrow, back to work and I'll see the doctor for my first follow up visit and I'll keep you posted as I continue this journey and the second surgery next week.

My biggest WOW right now it how bright white is with my new eye! The old eye looks like someone turned the dimmer switch down. This is exciting!

Day one after surgery. I was so excited, I didn't sleep well. Realizing how dim my vision had become without me even realizing it blew me away! Colors are so much more...colorful! I couldn't wait to go to work and see my quilts on display. Even washing my hands, the water seemed clearer. I got in the car to drive to work and when I turned on the headlights, the windshield looked clearer!

Amazing.

I was told to expect halos around lights for awhile. Yep, have those. But they don't bother me. The floaters are just on the edge of my vision and not hard to ignore. Decided to see if I could go through the day without my glasses. I read the Bible without glasses (and not a large print version, either!). I worked all day in the office.

Saw my surgeon for the one day checkup. My best corrected vision before surgery was 20/25 with a fair amount of astigmatism. Now I can see 20/20 and a negligible amount of astigmatism. No glasses. I can see to read, work on the computer and drive. It's like "normal" vision but so much clearer! If it continues to get better in the next few weeks as my vision stabilizes, well I can't imagine.

I'm excited about life! Did the dim vision cause a bit of depression? Well, today I tried to give a hug to everyone I work with to thank them for the part they play in helping people like me see better. What a gift and a blessing.

One week later. Scheduled for a one week post op and second surgery. Depending on how your eye heals, your personal preference and the difference between your eyes, surgeries can be scheduled 1-3 weeks or further apart. I was fortunate to be 1 week.

I have noticed a lot of struggle between my new eye and the other one this past week. It felt like the new eye was doing about 90% of the work and the old one was trying to keep up. Those floaters from the medication last week? They were gone 3 days after surgery. What was really cool was turning on my side to read in bed without my glasses getting in the way!

Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal

The halos are much smaller around lights, more something I observe but not causing any difficulty. All in all, it's been a great week between surgeries!

My one week check up was great. Healing well, seeing 20/20 without correction. My biggest hobby is sewing quilt tops, so I've asked my surgeon to set my lens power for reading or "near" vision to help me with my hand sewing.

My surgical experience was every bit as good as the first time. I even slept a bit before and during! I still don't remember a great deal of what went on in the OR... and I can say that because I know what happens since I work there! The medication in my eye this time is more like a cloud over the outside half of my vision. I had a foreign body sensation which I knew was the incision from surgery, and artificial tears took care of that.

I'll check in again tomorrow and let you know how I am with the dilation gone. I'm still ecstatic with my surgery. I'm very proud to be a part of the Team at The Harman Eye Clinic. It's a blessing to help others with improving their vision, and I'm one of many staff members who have experienced the benefit of various procedures we can do. iLASIK, Refractive Lens Exchange, Cataract surgery with an assortment of lens options. It's all good!

I had my one day post op after my second surgery. My vision was pretty blurry due to a bit of swelling on the cornea, so I've waited to share.

Now when you decide on having a "lifestyle lens," you really have to think about how you spend your time and what your particular vision needs are. Myself, I work on a computer and interact with patients. Ok, that's 40 hours of my week. Typically, I'm awake about 122 hours in a week, so that accounts for 1/3 of my time. Driving: an hour a day. Family time includes reading, watching television, board games. Weekends are your typical housekeeping chores. Hobbies? Making quilts! Accurately measuring, cutting, sewing and pressing. Hand sewing the bindings on finished quilts. For me, being able to thread a needle and follow a line of stitching was vital.

Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal



These Symphony lenses have the ability to let you see for reading, computer and driving. But super fine like I wanted required either cheaters (non-prescription magnifying glasses you find in a drug store) or, choosing a power for the implant that would provide that. Choosing that option may require glasses for driving. That is the choice I made.

Right now, I'm threading needles and hand sewing along that line of stitching!

Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal

My advice to those of you considering a Lifestyle lens? Evaluate your life! What are your visual needs? Communicate this to your surgeon. You may be an avid outdoor enthusiast, golfer, pilot or ham operator! Reading may be your passion. There's as many lifestyles as there are people, each one unique and important.

I still have a couple weeks for my vision to stabilize, but right now I have what I can only describe as "normal" vision. I'm seeing what I want to see. How awesome is that?!?



I had both my Cataract Surgeries in October last year, a short five months ago. My vision was so amazing after surgery I felt like I was on cloud nine!

Cataract Surgery: A Patient's Journal

Return of Blurry Vision After Cataract Surgery

But over the last 4-6 weeks, I started noticing I was needing my drugstore readers more and more often because I couldn't focus on the smaller print again, or the light was too dim. Now I have the Symphony lenses, so super fine print and low light required the readers on occasion, but this was beginning to be an increasing necessity. I was scheduled for a dilated followup, so I waited until that visit to discuss with my surgeon.

I work here at The Harman Eye Clinic, so I knew what was happening... I had [Posterior Capsular Opacity \(PCO\)](#) and was going to need a YAG Laser* treatment. I've been here long enough to know that 20-30% of cataract patients develop significant PCO and require this treatment to clear up their vision. I also know it can be anywhere from 2 weeks to 20+ years before it's needed! Some people refer to it as an "after cataract" because it's something that develops after cataract surgery. It's also referred to as a "secondary cataract" which also means after cataract. It isn't the cataract coming back. It's not something that went wrong with your surgery. It's just that some people can develop a thickening of the back (posterior) of the lens capsule which holds the artificial lens in place. This thickening of the capsule causes your vision to become cloudy (opaque).

Sure enough, my exam showed that glare was back and my vision was decreased. Time to schedule the YAG appointments.

While the procedure name sounds pretty unusual, the procedure itself is fairly simple. There weren't any restrictions... in fact it's a lot like going for an eye exam! Vitals, drops to dilate the eye that was going to be treated, sit down in front of the laser with your chin in a chin rest, focus on a little green light for a few minutes and you're done. The surgeon uses the laser to create a small opening in the capsule to allow what you see to get to your retina without having to pass through that opaque tissue. My surgeon explained that I might notice some floaters afterwards (which I didn't) and to call if I had problems.

I used some artificial tears after I got home because my eye felt dry, and I was dilated for a couple of hours. I drove myself, went shopping on my way home and resumed normal activities... except I couldn't read through that blurry eye!

*YAG is the abbreviation for Yttrium Aluminum Garnet which is a crystal that is used as a lasing medium (see, YAG is much easier!).

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