



Glaucoma : Silent Vision Snatcher

Protect your vision

Kapil Jindal, a 42-year-old executive felt on the top of the world with a steady income, good health prospects and a happy family. One day, however, on accidentally closing one eye, he noticed that his left eye seemed to have some areas of missing vision. He rushed to an ophthalmologist and was diagnosed as having advanced glaucoma in one eye and early glaucomatous changes in the other. Suddenly, the world seemed dark and all his dreams shattered.

After a comprehensive ophthalmic examination and an array of tests, a laser procedure was performed and anti-glaucoma drops were initiated. His pressure soon returned to near normal. A dialogue with his doctor made him fully understand the nature of this disease. He felt assured

Almost 68% Indians run the risk of developing glaucoma and nearly 1.2 lakh Indians go blind every year due to this disease. At a recent counseling session organised at Centre for Sight at its premises, Dr Charu Khurana informed that while the disease cannot be prevented, it can certainly be controlled



that together with his doctor's advice, timely check ups and appropriate treatment, this silent vision snatcher could be kept at bay. Jindal is back to where he had left, a

man with a new lease of life and new dreams to chase. He says about his experience, "The more I have come to know about glaucoma, the lesser are my fears. Glau-

coma is no longer ruling my life."

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma or 'Kala Motia' is a condition wherein an increased intraocular pressure damages the optic nerve thereby affecting vision. A fluid known as aqueous nourishes the front part of the eye. In the normal eye, the rate of production of aqueous matches the rate of its drainage, thereby maintaining optimal pressure inside the eye. With age, disease, trauma or other factors, the channels carrying this fluid may get blocked, increasing the pressure inside the eye. This increased pressure damages the optic nerve, which is the conduit of visual messages to the brain. Working silently, glaucoma damages the outer or peripheral vision first while maintaining the central vision.

POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS OF GLAUCOMA:

- Inability to adjust the eyes to darkened rooms such as theaters
- Poor night vision
- Frequent changes in eyeglass prescription
- Gradual loss of peripheral vision
- Blurred vision
- Feeling of a blind area in the eye
- Seeing rainbow colored halos around lights
- Severe eye pain, facial pain, nausea and vomiting
- Red eye

Why is it called the silent thief?

Glaucoma is called the silent thief of sight because in the early stages of the disease, there may be no symptoms. This condition threatens vision and is known to gradually steal sight without warning. By the time glaucoma is detected, the patient has already suffered extensive peripheral vision damage which can no longer be restored.

How many people are affected by glaucoma?

It is the leading cause of blindness in the United States and a study presented at the World Ophthalmological Congress in 2008 has pro-

jected India as the next glaucoma capital. Almost 68% Indians run the risk of developing the disease and nearly 1.2 lakh Indians go blind every year due to this disease.

What are the types of glaucoma?

There are two major types of glaucoma-Chronic or Primary Open-Angle Glaucoma (POAG) and Closed or Acute Angle-Closure Glaucoma. The chronic open angle form of glaucoma is the most common form. Damage to vision is gradual and generally painless. In the Closed or Acute form, the intraocular pressure increases very rapidly due to a sudden and severe block of fluid drainage within the eye. Significant symptoms indicating the presence of acute glaucoma appear immediately. This condition has to be treated quickly by an ophthalmologist otherwise blindness may occur.

can be controlled so that further damage to the optic nerve can be slowed down or halted. This can only be done through disciplined and regular treatment from an ophthalmologist. The treatment of glaucoma is life-long.

What does the management of glaucoma entail?

Glaucoma treatment may include medical management, surgical management or management by lasers. Medical management is done with eye drops. Surgical management includes a procedure where an opening is made to create a new drainage pathway for the fluid to leave the eye easily. Management by lasers includes procedures such as trabeculoplasty, in which a laser is used to pull open the trabecular meshwork drainage area; iridotomy, in which a tiny hole is made in the iris, allowing the fluid to flow more freely; and cyclophotocoagulation, in which a laser beam treats areas of the ciliary body, reducing the production of fluid.



Dr Charu Khurana

Is there a cure for glaucoma?

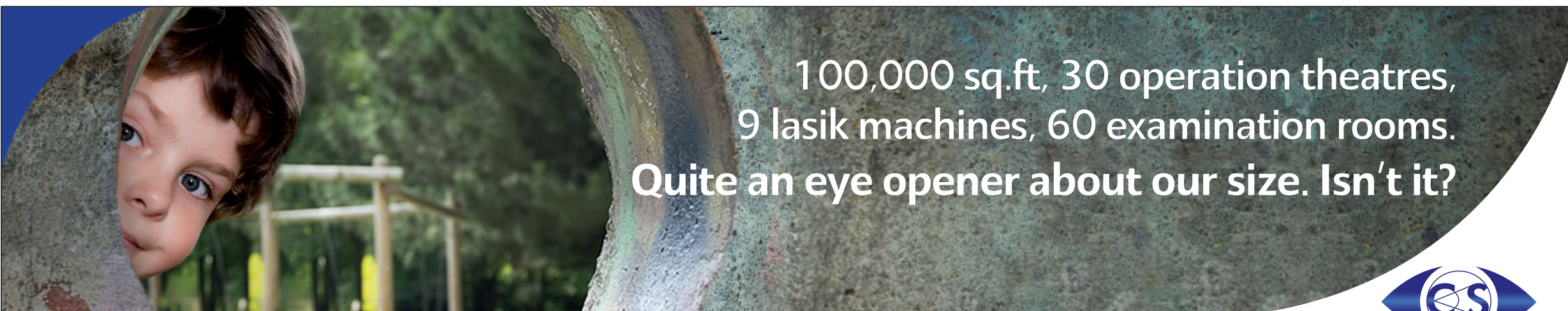
Glaucoma cannot be cured but it

WHAT YOU OUGHT TO KNOW?

- There is no proven way to prevent glaucoma. Frequent monitoring, regular check ups can help detect the disease in its early stages.
- Don't let glaucoma limit your life. You can continue with what you were doing before glaucoma was diagnosed. You can make new plans and start new ventures.
- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Use the right drop in the right eye at the right time in the right way.
- Try to schedule time for taking medication around daily routines such as waking, mealtimes and bedtime.
- Drinking large quantities of water on empty stomach early morning should be stopped. This habit temporarily increases the Intra Ocular pressure.

YOU ARE AT RISK, IF:

- You are 45 years of age or above
- You have a family history of glaucoma
- You have health problems such as diabetes, hypertension or thyroid disease
- You suffer from myopia or near sightedness
- You have had ocular trauma or intra ocular surgery in the past.



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