Celebrating 15 Years of Ophthalmic Excellence

The Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) began operations in 1990, with a team of just 9 people.

Over the years, we have expanded our team to more than 450 medical, nursing, allied professional and administrative staff. We now manage close to 250,000 patient visits and carry out 25,000 operations and procedures every year.

The SNEC has always strived to provide the highest standard of eye care to all our patients without exception. It is this mindset of not compromising on our quality service that has brought us our many accomplishments.

We recorded a world’s first in stem cell and conjunctival transplantation, a region’s first in the complex two-stage ‘tooth in eye’ operation and have published and presented repeatedly in the most prestigious medical journals and scientific meeting.

We have established a network of collaborating ophthalmic institutions in the region and globally. Many young aspiring ophthalmologists as well as senior doctors, both local and foreign, have looked to us in the furtherance of their knowledge and skills.

Of the future, Clinical Associate Professor Ang Chong Iye, Director of SNEC, foresees that globalization, advancement in information technology and a growing and prosperous Asia-Pacific region will present new opportunities and challenges. In his address to the staff of SNEC during the 15th Anniversary Gala, he stressed that SNEC must think global and act local and beyond that, be cutting-edge, innovative, yet retaining the robust foundation of affordable ophthalmic care for our patients.

The best is yet to be!
SingVision™ was launched on the occasion of our 15th Anniversary to embody our four core values and the five vital behaviours that express these values.

SingVision™ describes the SNEC spirit and the SNEC way of life. It is the driving force behind all SNEC activities as we attend to every patient in our clinics, operating theatres and paramedical departments everyday. It is SNEC’s signature to ensure ‘No Compromise’ in the delivery of the highest quality standards and genuine care to our patients.

SingVision™ - Our pledge of Quality Care with No Compromise

Serving You Better

• Listing Rooms
• Take your time

We have upgraded our listing Rooms to create a more private and comfortable environment for pre-operative counselling.

• It’s good to see

At SNEC, we celebrate sight. The appreciation of art pieces is one of the many pleasures that sight brings.
Tele-Ophthalmology transmission linking up Ophthalmologists from China, India and Singapore

The Singapore National Eye Centre played host to the first tele-ophthalmology transmission which saw a link-up among ophthalmologists from China, India and Singapore.

At the Singapore-Chinese Ophthalmology Updates 2005 held at the SNEC Auditorium on 11 November, a special programme was conducted which saw the participation of ophthalmologists from Singapore and China who were joined by their counterparts from Aravind Eye Care System, the largest eye centre in India, who viewed the surgeries transmitted in real time through the tele-ophthalmology link-up.

Among the surgeries demonstrated by SNEC ophthalmologists was Asia’s first successful laser-assisted Corneal Graft surgery.

THE STRAITS TIMES

Eye centre scores with surgery telecast

BY SALMA KHALIL
Health Correspondent

SINGAPORE took another step to becoming one of Asia’s top eye centres yesterday, with a live telecast of eye surgery to doctors at Aravind Eye Care System, India’s largest eye care provider.

Also sitting in on the two-hour transmission were more than 40 eye doctors from Shanghai, who are on a study programme at the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC).

Associate Professor Donald Tan, director of the Singapore Eye Research Institute and deputy director of the SNEC, did a corneal transplant with a new $300,000 state-of-the-art laser.

Prof Tan said the laser cuts the cornea cleanly and this can make a significant difference in the end result of surgery. Hand-cut corneas tend to have slightly jagged edges. Singapore does about 200 corneal transplants a year. The next tele-surgical conference, scheduled for next year, will show eye doctors here what the Indian eye centre is capable of.

Aravind, based in Tamil Nadu state, does 220,000 major eye operations a year, making it the biggest eye care provider in India, and possibly the world, said SNEC director Ang Chong Lye.

The SNEC signed a memorandum of agreement with Aravind, that includes working together on research projects and treatment of glaucoma.

The SNEC is also working with German laser company 20/10 Perfect Vision to improve laser equipment. Prof Tan has asked for a laser machine that will enable surgeons to slice a 0.5mm-thick cornea in half, so only the top or bottom half can be used. In 30 per cent of transplant cases, only the top layer of a cornea is needed. If a laser does not use this technique, this 30 per cent can use just the top half and avoid rejection.

In the case of those who need just the bottom half, it can be slipped under the existing top and avoid the need for stitches, which can distort the cornea. Replacing only the bottom layer also preserves nerves, ensuring continued sensation rather than eye numbness.

Clin A/Prof Ang Chong Lye, Director, SNEC with Prof Zhu Remyuan, President, Chinese Medical Association, Shanghai.

Strait Times, 12 November 2005

Clin A/Prof Ang exchanging moments with Dr P Nampananomthy, Vice-Chairman, Aravind Eye Care System [right] at the signing of the MOU. With them are Prof Donald Tan and senior Aravind ophthalmologists.
Diabetic Retinopathy & Your Eyes

Diabetes is the sixth leading cause of death and the third most commonly treated disease at the government outpatient polyclinics in Singapore. It is a cause of concern as its prevalence has been rising steadily.

People with diabetes are at risk of developing eye disease that can permanently damage their vision and even lead to blindness. Diabetes causes diabetic retinopathy as well as other disorders such as retinal arterial and venous occlusions. Diabetes can also result in early onset cataract formation, glaucoma and strokes affecting the optic nerve (ischemic optic neuropathy).

What is diabetic retinopathy?
Diabetic retinopathy affects people with diabetes. The high sugar level in the blood weakens and affects the function of the capillaries (small blood vessels) in the retina (the back of the eye), resulting in diabetic retinopathy.

When this happens, the capillaries cannot function normally and they start to form out-pouchings that can result in small areas of bleeding seen in early disease, classified as mild non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy. The abnormal capillaries can also leak fluid containing proteins and fatty substances into the retina, causing swelling of the retina, known as macular oedema. The weakened capillaries may collapse and cause blood and oxygen supply to the area to fail, leading to ischaemia (capillary non-perfusion) and cell death of the affected retina. This will in turn trigger the growth of new capillaries to enable more blood and oxygen to be delivered to the affected retina. This stage of disease is called proliferative diabetic retinopathy. These new capillaries however are abnormal and weak. They can rupture and bleed and cause sudden loss of vision. As they grow, scar tissue grows with them, which can exert tractional force on the retina, causing retinal detachments with distortion or loss of vision.

How will I know if I have diabetic retinopathy?
Unfortunately, vision remains normal in the early stages of diabetic retinopathy and the diabetic individual can be totally symptom free.

As the diabetic retinopathy advances, there may be a slow but progressive visual loss. Alternatively, there might be sudden visual loss with floaters because of bleeding inside the eye.

What increases the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy?
The most important risk factor is duration of diabetes. The longer the duration, the greater the likelihood of developing diabetic retinopathy.

The next most important risk factor is blood sugar control. Several studies done in USA, UK and Europe have shown that good sugar control not only prolongs the onset of diabetic retinopathy, it also controls the severity of the disease.

Other risk factors include concurrent disease affecting other organs such as kidneys, nervous system, anaemia, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, eye surgery, cigarette smoking and pregnancy.
What can I do to prevent diabetic retinopathy or stop its progress?
Most importantly, you should ensure good control of the blood sugar levels. Ideally, the HbA1c levels should be less than 7.0% and the average blood glucose level should be less than 8mmol/L. This can be achieved through compliance with treatment, regular visits to the doctors and being careful with food.

Lifestyle modification is also crucial to assisting with diabetic control. This involves regular exercise, stopping of cigarette smoking and maintaining a healthy balanced diet. Other concurrent diseases such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol should also be well-controlled.

Can diabetic retinopathy be cured once it develops?
In the early stage, with very minimal changes and good blood sugar control, it is possible to reverse or stabilise the diabetic retinopathy.

Once there is advanced diabetic retinopathy, the aim of the treatment will be to preserve what vision is left. Unfortunately, damaged nerve cells cannot be replaced as nerve cells cannot reproduce themselves.

The mainstay of treatment for severe diabetic retinopathy is laser photocoagulation. This involves creating tiny burns on the retinal surface to control the disease process. However, if there is very advanced diabetic retinopathy with scar tissue formation and retinal detachment, laser treatment alone will be inadequate. Surgery to remove the scar tissue and return the retina back to its original position will have to be considered.

Can diabetic retinopathy lead to blindness?
YES!

Once there is damage to the nerve cells of the retina, these cells cannot reproduce themselves and vision will be permanently affected.

So, what should a person with diabetes do in terms of his / her eye care?
It is important to go for a yearly diabetic retinopathy screening. This can be achieved with photography of the back of the eye, i.e. the retina. The photographs will be able to document the presence or absence of diabetic retinopathy. This service is available at all outpatient polyclinics, diabetic centres and at the Singapore National Eye Centre.

The photographs will be read by a trained doctor. If any abnormality is detected, you will be advised to be reviewed by an ophthalmologist.
6th National Eye Care Day

1,000 medical, nursing, allied professional and non-medical staff from the Singapore National Eye Centre and the eye departments of Tan Tock Seng Hospital, National University Hospital, Alexandra Hospital and Changi General Hospital, came together on the early morning of Saturday, 3 December 2005 with one mission - to provide preventive eye screening to the public, especially the needy and the elderly. The event was supported by the mayors of the 5 Community Development Councils (CDCs). All the eye institutions conducted free eye screening at their premises on the same day, making the 6th National Eye Care Day the largest national eye care day event to-date.

A total of 3,000 members of the public received free eye screening at the 5 locations. In addition, the Diabetic Society of Singapore (DSS) and the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) provided 1,500 senior citizens with free health screening at the SNEC. There was also a series of educational talks on eye diseases and eye care at the participating institutions with focus on common age-related eye conditions such as cataract, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy.

Cataract Surgery Mission in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Worldwide, cataract continues to be the leading cause of avoidable blindness and is responsible for about 50% or 18 million of the world’s blindness.

SNEC collaborated with local eye doctor from Benh Vien Nguyen Trai Hospital in November 2005 and again in January 2006 with the Franco-Vietnamese Hospital to conduct free cataract surgery in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam to restore sight to 60 poor and needy patients who were visually incapacitated from cataracts. The free cataract surgery initiatives were made possible under the auspices of local NGOs, the Sponsoring Association for Poor (SAPP) and the Vietnam-Singapore Friendship Association together with the support of the Consulate-General of the Republic of Singapore.

Through these collaborative efforts, we work with local ophthalmologists to provide needy patients with access to cataract surgery and to promote public awareness of cataract blindness. The initiative also facilitated collaboration and scientific knowledge and skills exchange between local surgeons and their SNEC counterparts.

Dr Peter Toong, Sr Consultant and Head, Cataract & Comprehensive Ophthalmology Service, SNEC conducting an eye examination.
The ASEAN Association of Eye Hospitals

The ASEAN Association of Eye Hospitals (AAEH) was founded by five eye hospitals in the ASEAN region to promote cooperation among ophthalmic institutions in the ASEAN and to advance ophthalmology in all three areas of service quality, education and research. The association celebrated its 1st anniversary in November 2005 in a meeting hosted by the Jakarta Eye Centre.

The founding members of AAEH seen here with the Indonesian Minister for Health, Dr Siti Fadila Supari (centre): From left to right:

- Ruitin Eye Hospital, Thailand, represented by Dr Noparat Sujaritichan
- American Eye Hospital, the Philippines, represented by Dr Benjamin Cabrera
- Jakarta Eye Center, Indonesia, represented by Dr Darwan M. Purba
- The Tun Hussein Onn Eye Hospital, Malaysia, represented by Dr S Kulasegaran and Dato' Dr V Ramani
- Singapore National Eye Centre, represented by Clin A/Prof Ang Chong Ly

For more information on the AAEH, please visit www.aseaneyeye.org

Team SNEC - Singapore Marathon 2005

Team SNEC comprising 22 SNEC doctors, nurses, allied professional and administrative staff from SNEC and SERI ran a total of 403 km at the Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon 2005 on 4 December 2005.

Team SNEC will be represented again at the SingHealth Interhospital cross-country run on 24 June 2006. Join Team SNEC and make a run across the country this year! Sign up now at SingVision@sne.com.sg

SNEC Presents

‘Clinical Ophthalmology - An Asian Perspective’

Two years into the making, the SNEC is proud to unveil ‘Clinical Ophthalmology - An Asian Perspective’, a textbook distilling the clinical pearls and cumulative experience that our eye doctors, clinicians-scientists and researchers have gleaned at the SNEC in the last 15 years of our history. This is one of the first major textbooks to focus on the diagnosis and management of Asian eye diseases.

We hope this textbook will serve the ophthalmic community and make a difference in the provision of ophthalmic care to patients in Asia.
For the Public

Public Forum on Beauty and Breakthrough in Eye Aesthetics

Surgeons from the Centre will cover a whole palette of options now available to treat and rejuvenate the periocular region. Procedures such as upper and lower lid blepharoplasty, brow lifts, Botox and fillers will also be discussed.

DATE : Saturday, 20 May 2006
VENUE : SNEC Auditorium, Level 4, Tower Block

For Ophthalmic Nurses

Basic Optometry Lecture cum Workshop for Nurses

Participants will gain a basic understanding of principles in optometry and the use of basic optometry tools to enhance nursing care to the ophthalmic patient.

DATE : Saturday, 1 July 2006
VENUE : SNEC Auditorium / Training Room, Level 4, Tower Block

For Optometrists, Opticians and Orthoptists

Clinical Update for Optometrists, Opticians and Orthoptists

This session provides practicing optometrists, opticians and orthoptists with updates on the latest developments and advances in eye care and eye surgeries.

DATE : Wednesday, 12 July 2006
VENUE : SNEC Auditorium, Level 4, Tower Block

For Family Physicians

An Update on Common Ophthalmic Problems in Family Medicine

This forum highlights the current issues in ophthalmic problems that are presented to the family physicians.

DATE : Saturday, 30 September 2006
VENUE : Auditorium, Level 1, Changi General Hospital

For more information on these events, please visit our website www.s nec.com.sg or send an email to meet@snec.com.sg

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This is the inaugural issue of our SingVision™ newsletter and it has been produced with you in mind. If there is something you would like to read about or if you would like to share your opinion with us, please write to:

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