

George H. Garcia, MD Ophthalmologist

Is the predicted spike in Americans over age 40 with diabetic-related eye conditions impacting your practice?

Although we're seeing many more diabetics, I'm pleased that the number of patients who have severe diabetes complications is down. Primary care physicians seem to be winning the battle with earlier diagnosis and diabetes treatment with better medications. They're sending patients to dietitians and classes on lifestyle changes, which makes our job easier.

Previously ophthalmology was an island, but we're now seeing more integration with other specialties. Those in primary care are more aware of conditions and their manifestations into the eyes, such as diabetes, thyroid disease or hypertension.

What else is changing in your world?

St. Joseph Hospital is one of those rare hospitals that has embraced changes, which I find very rewarding for patients. Advanced lens implants that can now correct for far and near vision have revolutionized cataract surgery. We have some fantastic new medications to control glaucoma,

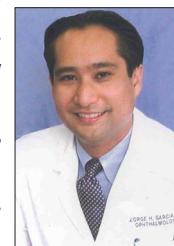
markedly decreasing the need for surgery. For those who do require intervention, the minimally invasive SLT laser procedures have proven very effective. We've also seen a shift in treating macular degeneration, a challenging area and the number one cause of vision loss in Americans over age 55. We're seeing amazing results using injections to treat patients who have wet macular degeneration which just a few years ago would have resulted in 90% vision loss.

When I started practicing in 1999 we were at the peak of the LASIK wave. About 2006 new techniques and computer-customized procedures reduced healing time and enabled us to detect contraindications for LASIK, so today it's safer and more effective.

Tear duct surgery, which previously led to scarring, is now done endoscopically through the nose. Blepharoplasty has also undergone a total shift in thinking in the past decade. Previously, fat was removed from puffy eyes. Today we're rearranging it and adding volume with impressive results. Botox, Juvederm and facial peels are less invasive and expensive alternatives to face lifts with less down time and more natural results.

Communication processes are also improving with electronic medical records (EMR). Our office was the first ophthalmology practice at St. Joseph Hospital to adopt EMR. Our goal is to improve coordination of care and help PCPs to have rapid, accurate information about their patients. What used to take a month to transcribe and send to the referring physician is now transmitted to them the same day as the exam or procedure.

Dr. Garcia is Chairman of Ophthalmology at St. Joseph Hospital, President of the Orange County Society of Ophthalmology, an Assistant Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at both the Jules Stein Eye Institute/UCLA and UCI Schools of Medicine, and a 2008 OCMA Physician of Excellence. He completed his pre-med studies at Cornell University in New York, his medical degree at UCLA, and a fellowship in Orbital and Ophthalmic Plastic Surgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin. These days his time away from work is spent with his children, ages three and 18 months.



A PUBLICATION FROM THE ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL MEDICAL STAFF OFFICE

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