

PEDIATRIC EYE SURGERY

Seeing Straight A's



Like most young boys, Tyler Campbell loves playing baseball and football. But by the time he turned six, he was having trouble seeing on the field and in school. Tyler's mom, Brittany Daniels, thought he might have cataracts—cloudy areas in the lens of the eye that can blur or block vision. While cataracts usually happen in older people, they can affect children as well.

Ms. Daniels had been on the lookout for cataracts since Tyler was born. The males in his father's side of the family were all born with cataracts, and inheritance is one way that children can get cataracts. She took him to eye doctors regularly. "For a while we thought we dodged a bullet because nobody had seen the cataracts," she said. By first grade though, Tyler needed glasses. He sat in front of the class, but still struggled to see. Ms. Daniels began looking for a pediatric eye doctor who specialized in cataracts, and found Nancy Sun, MD, at The Bristol-Myers Squibb Children's Hospital (BMSCH) at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital.

"Cataracts in children are more complex than adults. Depending on the age of onset, they may permanently impair vision," said Dr. Sun, one of the only surgeons in New Jersey who operates on children with cataracts. By the time Dr. Sun saw Tyler, his cataracts were significantly impacting his vision. She recommended surgery to remove them.

In two separate same-day surgeries at the Center for Advanced Pediatric Surgery at BMSCH, Dr. Sun removed the cataracts and replaced the lenses with artificial lenses. The child-friendly Center for Advanced Pediatric Surgery creates a comforting

environment for children and their families and features operating rooms, technology, staff, and processes tailored to children. "This center is specialized to care for kids," said Dr. Sun. For example, Ms. Daniels was able to be with Tyler when he got the anesthesia and was waiting for him in the recovery room when he woke up.

"Tyler's vision improved the day after surgery and continues to improve," said Dr. Sun. While Tyler is still wearing glasses, Dr. Sun hopes he will outgrow them. Tyler's most recent report card was full of "As" and a few "Bs," adds Ms. Daniels proudly. "He is right back to being the same kid, only 10 times better because he can see."

Early screening for kids with family histories of childhood cataracts or lazy eye is most important, says Dr. Sun. Parents should tell their pediatricians about these family histories as well as any vision problems they notice. Signs of vision problems include clouding of the pupil (which should be black), a "red reflex" (reflection) that is only in one eye or missing in photos, crossed or wandering eyes, or an infant who does not appear to see. Some vision problems can become permanent if not treated in time. Pediatric eye doctors are experts in treating children's eye problems and performing child-friendly eye exams.

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