

News Release

Contact: John Cappiello
203-384-3637
John.Cappiello@bpt.hosp.org

New laser enhances cataract surgery at Bridgeport Hospital

BRIDGEPORT, CT (Nov. 14, 2018) – Former teacher Sandra Schmidlin of Shelton has 20/20 vision again thanks to a course of eye treatment that included Bridgeport Hospital's first-time use of a new surgical laser that works with unprecedented precision on a microscopic scale.

The 68-year-old Schmidlin taught English at Flood Middle School in Stratford for almost four decades. She coped with a range of vision problems, including astigmatism, glaucoma and nearsightedness, using traditional eyeglasses and contact lenses. But it was a diagnosis of cataracts in early 2018 that led her to Bridgeport Hospital ophthalmologist Vicente Diaz, MD.

Cataracts (clouding of the eye's natural lens) occur when aging, injury or medical conditions such as diabetes change the tissue that makes up the lens. In laser-assisted cataract surgery, a laser replaces or assists the use of a hand-held surgical tool for making incisions in the cornea (the transparent layer forming the front of the eye) and eye lens capsule, and also softens the cataract making it easier to remove.

An avid reader to this day, Schmidlin says she no longer wanted to wear glasses. Dr. Diaz told her she might benefit from the use of the hospital's new Catalys femtosecond laser system. The Catalys laser allows the surgeon to complete preparatory steps safely and precisely, then continue by removing the clouded lens and replace it with a clear artificial lens. The artificial lens is positioned in the same place as the natural lens and remains a permanent part of the eye.

A femtosecond is one quadrillionth of a second, the ultrashort endurance of each burst of energy emitted by the laser.

“Laser-assisted surgery is a major advancement in cataract surgery,” said Dr. Diaz. “Outcomes are much more precise and predictable. Also, because the laser uses less energy to break down the cataract than previous technology, recovery is often quicker. Finally, the precision of the incisions treats astigmatism, allowing for better distance vision.”

Schmidlin says she could see better within a day or two of her August surgery, which she described as nearly painless. The improvement in her vision was profound.

“It was amazing,” she said. “Colors looked much more vivid. They were clear and beautiful!”

Dr. Diaz, along with his colleague Brian DeBroff, MD, were among the first ophthalmologists at Bridgeport Hospital to use the new Catalys laser system and the hospital hopes that others will be trained in its use in the near future.

Bridgeport Hospital, part of Yale New Haven Health, is a 383-bed acute care hospital (plus 42 beds licensed to Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital) serving parts of Fairfield and New Haven counties. The hospital admits more than 21,000 patients and receives over 315,000 outpatient treatments annually. The Connecticut Burn Center at Bridgeport Hospital is the only burn center in the state and one of only 65 verified burn centers in the United States.