

# Together we can

## Ophthalmology



From the preschooler with a “lazy eye” to the housebound senior, her lenses clouded with cataracts; from the weekend warrior with a detached retina to the business leader who has experienced sudden vision loss, chances are, you or someone you know in our community has sought treatment for a sudden or chronic eye condition, disease or injury.

Surgery to repair cataracts is the most common surgery in medicine today, and every one of us will develop a cataract at some point in our lives. As our community’s population ages — a higher than average number of Kingston and area residents, 15%, are already over age 65 — the rate of eye-related illnesses will continue to grow. Macular degeneration, glaucoma and cataracts are

debilitating eye diseases that primarily strike older adults and can rob them of their vision and independence.

The 12-member ophthalmology team at the university hospitals of Kingston offers a unique range of expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of these common conditions, along with a wide range of other eye diseases and injuries. Among health care centres of this size, it is one of just a handful of ophthalmology departments to offer expertise in every sub-specialty, including neuro-ophthalmology, pediatric ophthalmology, and cornea and retina diseases.

Government doesn’t pay for all of our hospitals’ equipment, research and education needs. That’s why local support for our

hospitals is critical if we want our community to have the very best health care services.

### Equipment

Accurate and timely diagnosis of many eye conditions often involves an extensive array of complex tests and equipment. Fortunately, as technology improves so does our ability to pinpoint the causes and potential treatments. Keeping abreast of these new developments — many of which cost between \$25,000 and \$175,000 each — is an ongoing priority and challenge for the Department of Ophthalmology. In 2007, the department acquired important technology that is already having a life-changing impact on patients with glaucoma. A practical alternative to invasive surgery and daily eye drops, the Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty uses a laser to stimulate fluid drainage from within the eye to prevent further visual loss. The procedure takes just a few minutes, has minimal side effects and is effective for up to five years. The savings — for the health-care system and patients faced with a lifetime of medication costs are immeasurable.

### Education

Education is a driving mission of the hospital’s ophthalmologists who consider the training of new ophthalmology residents their “academic raison d’être.” Their





efforts are paying off. The university hospitals of Kingston is the number one choice for Canada's top medical graduates pursuing careers in ophthalmology. Of the 45 applicants nationwide in 2007, Kingston attracted its top two ranked candidates — an outstanding achievement among the 15 Canadian hospitals with ophthalmology resident training programs.

The team's commitment to education doesn't end with residents. Physicians and staff participate regularly in advanced education and training programs, and the hospital's specialists are in high demand as guest speakers at national and international courses and conferences.

Investments in both resident and staff education will have important benefits for patient care. An offer of a fellowship is oftentimes the deciding factor for talented medical school graduates considering a residency in Kingston. A privately-funded education fund can help to offset tuition and travel expenses; ensure a growing number of physicians and staff stay abreast of developments in the field; and strengthen the team's capacity to deliver novel and timely care. A fund to provide relief time for nursing education, for example, will enable the program to retain on-call nursing staff to care for patients when full-time team members are away for training or at a conference.

## Research

Clinical research is an integral component of the ophthalmology program leading to improved patient care. A recent discovery by Dr. Sanjay Sharma, for example, has resulted in new nationwide clinical standards for the diagnosis and treatment of retinal detachment. His findings, which include a detailed list of symptoms and their recommended interventions, have resulted in improved patient outcomes and the establishment of a new ocular health policy.

Other, ongoing research holds untapped promise for patient care:

- The team's pediatric ophthalmologist is studying the ways in which existing camera technology can be used to detect early eye disease in children. Early findings will soon be presented to the national pediatric

society in the hope of securing funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for a pilot phase screening program.

- Research into the medications used to prevent swelling after cataract surgery may lead to new standards of post-surgical care.
- In collaboration with Queen's Faculty of Engineering, the hospital's glaucoma specialist is developing a new method of filtration surgery, a procedure that opens the drainage area within the eye. This method is widely expected to revolutionize glaucoma surgery within a handful of years.

## Opportunities for giving

- Unrestricted gifts to help the program  
*No minimum*
- Patient care equipment (list available)  
*\$1,000 - \$175,000*
- Send a nurse to a conference or training session  
*\$500 - \$3,000*
- Support on-site training session for clinical staff  
*\$2,000 - \$5,000*
- Invest in local hospital research  
*No minimum*