



Eye on Health

Seeing A Screen Legend Clearly

Olivia de Havilland Reminds Public Of Importance Of Cataract Awareness



(NAPSA)—Fans of two-time Academy Award-winning actress Olivia de Havilland delight in seeing her on the screen in such classics as “The Heiress,” “The Adventures of Robin Hood” and “Gone With the Wind.” But until recently, Ms. de Havilland could barely see herself in the mirror. Cataracts had so diminished her vision that she was legally blind.

“When I looked in the mirror, I saw a pink oval with a whitish halo around my head, and an indication of eyes,” she recalls. “When I applied my lipstick I could see my mouth.”

Ms. de Havilland was hardly alone in her problem. Cataracts gradually cloud the normally clear lenses of the eye, causing vision to become blurry or dull. Fortunately, this leading cause of vision loss can be treated. Because she had cataracts in both eyes, Ms. de Havilland’s ophthalmologist, James Salz, M.D., performed outpatient surgery to remove the cataract and insert an intraocular lens in one eye, and once that healed, in the second eye. The results were dramatic: Her vision is now 20/40.

“One morning not long after my second surgery, I looked in the mirror and was amazed to see my face in great detail,” Ms. de Havilland says. “Not only could I see my eyelashes, but I learned I had a furrowed brow—which was not welcome news!” She adds, jokingly, “I also discovered that rather than a glowing white halo, I had hair, like regular people.”

The American Academy of Ophthalmology says those at risk for cataracts should see an ophthal-

mologist (Eye M.D.). The most common type of cataract is related to aging. Other risk factors include family history, diabetes and other illnesses, eye injury, and use of steroids and similar medications. Cataract removal is the most common surgery performed in the United States. More than 95 percent of the 1.8 million surgeries performed annually have no complications.

“Cataract surgery is one of the most successful procedures available for restoring a patient’s quality of life,” says Dr. Salz, a clinical professor of ophthalmology at the University of Southern California and a clinical correspondent for the Academy. “Technological advances in recent years have made cataract surgery faster, safer, more comfortable and ultimately more effective. Vision loss can be reversed in the vast majority of cases.”

As Ms. de Havilland’s experience shows, seeing an Eye M.D. to check for cataracts can be the first step to improved vision.

Because exposure to the sun increases the risk of developing cataracts, Americans of all ages can reduce their risk by using UV-protective sunglasses or contact lenses and hats when outdoors for longer than 15 minutes, even on cloudy days. Also, new research suggests that cataract risk may be reduced or deferred by eating plenty of dark green, leafy vegetables that contain the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin.

More information on cataracts and how to preserve vision, as well as how to access care, is available on the Academy-sponsored Web site www.geteyesmart.org.



About the American Academy of Ophthalmology:

AAO is the world’s largest association of eye physicians and surgeons—Eye M.D.’s—with more than 27,000 members worldwide. Eye health care is provided by the three “O’s”—opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists. It is the ophthalmologist, or Eye M.D., who can treat it all: eye diseases and injuries, and perform eye surgery. To find an Eye M.D. in your area, visit the Academy’s Web site at www.aaopt.org.