

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Wills Eye Hospital/Tulane Medical Center Launch New Glaucoma Study

Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty is Focus of New Glaucoma Study to Assess Efficacy Compared with Topical Medication as Primary Therapy

Philadelphia, Pa., (January 24, 2003) – In recognition of National Glaucoma Awareness Month, L. Jay Katz, M.D., Co-Director of the Glaucoma Service at Wills Eye Hospital, and William Steinmann, M.D., MSc, Director of Glaucoma Research at Wills Eye Hospital and Director of the Center for Clinical Effectiveness and Prevention at Tulane University, are pleased to announce the launch of a clinical study to investigate the efficacy of Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT) compared with conventional medical management as monotherapy for open angle glaucoma.

Called SLT/MED, the study is a multi-center, prospective, randomized and controlled study designed to investigate SLT as initial treatment for open angle glaucoma compared with topical medical therapy. The study is sponsored and funded by Lumenis, Inc., of Santa Clara, Calif., and is being coordinated through Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia, Pa., and Tulane University Center for Clinical Effectiveness and Prevention in New Orleans, La.

"This clinical trial will discern whether SLT, a laser procedure, is equal to or better than the use of medication to lower eye pressure. Use of the SLT laser could produce fewer drug-related side effects, minimize the cost and lead to a better quality of life," says Dr. Katz.

This research study will be conducted at 17 sites, including Wills Eye Hospital. Approximately 20 patients will be recruited from each clinical center, and approximately 340 patients in total will participate in the study.

SLT will be performed with the Selecta[®] Glaucoma Laser System (Lumenis, Inc.), which is a frequency doubled Nd:YAG laser. This laser has been demonstrated to target only pigmented cells in the trabecular meshwork of the eye. Unlike older laser trabeculoplasty methods, there is no thermal injury to the meshwork with SLT treatment.

SLT works by treating only specific melanin-containing cells located in the trabecular meshwork of the eye, leaving all other cells intact. This stimulation promotes the body's own natural healing response, allowing fluid to move more freely out of the eye to successfully lower intraocular eye pressure. SLT patented technology was developed by Lumenis, Inc., and received clearance from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in March 2001.

With regard to medicine, compliance concerns and side effects increase the challenge of medical therapy for glaucoma. With a chronic disease such as glaucoma, noncompliance with medical therapy is a serious problem. Since early to moderate stages of glaucoma are generally asymptomatic, the patient may not notice the negative effects of noncompliance.

Furthermore, the economic burden associated with long-term daily medical therapy for glaucoma is considerable and expected to rise. If SLT were to replace or decrease the number of glaucoma medications necessary to adequately treat glaucoma patients, there could be an expected decline in treatment side effects, improvement in associated quality of life measures and reduced cost of health care.

Glaucoma is a progressive eye disease, which can, if left untreated, lead to permanent blindness. It is characterized by a buildup of fluid within the eye, causing an increase in eye pressure. The increase in pressure causes the optic nerve to be pinched, resulting in nerve cell death and vision loss.