

Changing lives with the gift of restored vision

Expert surgical techniques can produce miracles where once there was no hope.

As a seven-year-old in Vietnam, Tess Huynh was sent on a boat with her young brother and 19-year-old aunt, bound for Australia. That first refugee journey turned out to be a short one, ending in a month-long stay back in a Vietnamese prison.

After her parents rescued her from jail, Huynh's determined family set off again and this time made it to a Malaysian island, from which an appeal to Australia for asylum was successful.

Huynh made the most of the opportunities afforded her in Australia, choosing to study medicine and then specialise in ophthalmology.

She chose ophthalmology after seeing a Christian Blind Mission promotional calendar outlining the work the charity undertook, helping to restore the sight of people living in third-world countries.

Today, as well as being part of a team of specialist doctors and surgeons at Sydney's South West Vision Institute, Dr Huynh regularly travels to Vietnam and Cambodia with Australian Health Humanitarian Aid (AHHA) to carry out sight-restoring cataract surgery on patients who could never afford the surgery themselves.

During each visit, Dr Huynh and other volunteer surgeons perform about 600 cataract operations across six days of surgery, which helps people who are blind and dependent on family to regain their vision and independence.



Another patient successfully treated by Dr Tess Huynh, as part of her work with AHHA.

"In Australia, people get treatment long before cataracts get to the stage of serious blindness. It is a relatively simple procedure – it takes about half an hour – and even though we are treating very, very bad cases [overseas], the miracle is that they can see again," Dr Huynh says.

Many South West Vision Institute special-

ists undertake charity work, as well as research and publish in their expert eye health fields.

Dr Huynh says the medical team of subspecialty ophthalmologists brings this dedication and commitment to their day-to-day work, which results in satisfied customers and repeat referrals from GPs and optometrists.

"Because we are leaders in our fields but a younger practice than the usual, I think we are in tune with the attitudes of now," she says.

"We treat patients as part of the team; we don't dictate to them what we are going to do and while we offer the best treatments available, we also consult and tailor treatment to their needs."

Cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy are the four primary conditions that result in patients presenting at the institute. However, the institute's range of expertise, both medical and surgical, means the team can treat any part of ocular anatomy, from the front of the eye to the back.

Dr Huynh says she has noticed a "wave of younger people coming through who rub their eyes because of allergies".

"They can get keratoconus, where the cornea at the front of the eye becomes distorted and stretched, so over time their vision becomes distorted, but they often think it is just their glasses that are the problem."

Without treatment, the cornea can become so distorted a patient may need a corneal transplant. This can be prevented if picked up early by corneal collagen cross-linking, which is performed regularly at the institute.

Regular eye-health checks, especially in young adults, means keratoconus and other conditions can be diagnosed and treated early to prevent permanent disability.

Dr Huynh suggests young people have a routine check every two years, which can also pick up "silent" diseases such as glaucoma. Both GPs and optometrists write referrals to the institute's specialists.



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- South West Vision Institute is a multi disciplinary ophthalmology practice located in Liverpool and has been supporting the community for over 10 years
- We offer the newest innovations in Laser Eye Surgery including SMILE "Keyhole LASIK"
- South West Vision Institute is proud to be the only private practice in the South West offering paediatric examination and strabismus surgery
- Our team is made up of highly respected & skilled ophthalmologists who are dedicated in making your vision our mission
- Our doctors have a passion for helping the less privileged and they are involved annually in charity work in Australasia

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