

History of LASIK at Eye Clinics North, West and East.

Lasik is one of a number of Refractive Surgery solutions offered to reduce ones' dependency on glasses or contacts. We also offer Photorefractive Keratectomy (PRK), Clear Lens Extraction, Limbal Relaxing Incisions combined with cataract surgery, Phakic Intraocular Lenses, and Presbyopia surgical solutions to declining near vision. Non-surgical solutions include Continuous Wear Contact Lenses (removed once per month) and Cornea Refractive Technology (CRT) to mold eyes while sleeping.

Historically, in 1993 Dr. Don Sipola and Dr. Roger Berglund came together within Dr. Sipola's offices to start a Refractive Surgery sub-specialty, the first in Northern Minnesota. Dr. Berglund brought the surgical interest and skills, and Dr. Sipola provided the multiple office locations and patient base in Virginia and Duluth to foster success. They both recognized this evolving specialty field would be very popular and those that got in on the ground floor would likely do the best. Initially, they offered Radial Keratotomy (RK), Astigmatic keratotomy (AK), and Automated Lamellar Keratectomy (ALK), sometimes combinations of two or all three. Surgeries were all done at Dr Sipola's Eye Clinic West in Duluth.

In 1995 both Doctors participated in FDA studies using the new Summit Excimer Laser for PRK refractive treatments. We were the first Eye Clinic in outstate Minnesota to use the yet to be approved Summit Laser. The FDA study was to determine if steroid drops to control inflammation after surgery was helpful of not to patient outcomes. They were.

With FDA approval of PRK in 1996, Eye Clinic West was the first outstate location to begin offering Laser PRK to the general public. The previously performed procedures began to decline in popularity. By 1998, laser-assisted in-situ keratomileusis (LASIK) became FDA approved as a marriage between PRK and the former ALK procedure. Doctors performing PRK who were also experienced in ALK were immediate converts to the new LASIK procedure as it was extremely patient friendly. The Summit laser was quickly replaced with another FDA newcomer, the VISX.

In 1999, Dr Berglund left the Eye Clinics and opened on his own nearby using the VISX. Also in 1999, LASIK competition from Canada infiltrated the entire USA. New business models surfaced in Canada, where with more advance technology than we had in the USA and high volume procedures at standalone LASIK Surgery centers, pricing dropped to \$900 USD for both eyes. Patients started inquiring. Dr. Sipola traveled to Winnipeg to see for himself what was happening at Lasik Vision Canada. After three days of observing pre-op exams and counselling, 50 eyes a day in surgery, and seeing the post- operative outcomes, it was apparent Canada had a

much better mouse trap. The Technology there was years ahead of what we had available in the states which directly related to how well people saw after.

Over the next 5 years, Dr. Sipola sent about 500 refractive surgeries to Canada. Slowly, as our FDA approved more modern technology and more laser models became available. By the later 2000's the technology gap in quality of vision outcomes between Canada and the USA narrowed, and the extreme low pricing business model ultimately failed leveling the prices across the border. The Canadian competition did assist in driving down prices in the US.

New laser models appeared in the USA that applied the laser beam in increasingly better ways to create a "smoother" treatment and better optics. Dr. Sipola met with and observed many surgeons and tracked the vision outcomes of surgery done on his patients by a number of laser models and surgeons/surgery centers in Minnesota. This included the Summit, VISX, Technolas 217, Zioptix 50 and 100, Nidek, Wavelight Allegretto, and the Zeiss Mel-80. It includes standard treatment, wavefront guided treatment and wavefront optimized treatments. Soon we will add topography guided treatment options as well (now only available in Canada).

With this data, we confidently recommend the technology that gives the best results, with the most experienced surgeons at the lowest possible cost that will ultimately provide the best vision. By 2015, Eye Clinics North, West, and East have had 22 years of experience in refractive surgery, with dozens of different refractive laser platforms and version upgrades. It is our goal to find you the best outcome which makes for the happiest satisfied patients and word of mouth referrals. Over the years, we have changed our recommendations as the technology and our outcome data matures. As such, we are not affiliated with any particular surgeon or laser center.

We provide patient selection, counselling and coordination, pre-operative testing to confirm candidacy, individual surgical procedure selection, make recommendations for a surgeon based on the specific procedure and eye condition, and provide 24 hour post-operative care starting with first day for up to one year.

To help assist you through the maze of LASIK ads and information, we offer free refractive surgery seminars to learn more, so you can make the best decisions for you. At the end of the seminar we hope to answer all the questions you did not even know to ask. Patients hate surprises, and so do we.