

Grace Vision Newsletter

Dr Kim McDonald

Volume #2, August 2025

Impacting the youth

My journey so far as a trainee in Ophthalmology at Grace Vision has been incredibly rewarding and humbling. We are so blessed to serve such a large community in need and to be able to use our knowledge and skills to make a positive impact in their lives.

One of the most meaningful areas of my work has been in the diagnosis and treatment of keratoconus, a progressive eye condition that disproportionately affects our youth. Many of our young patients were dismissed as simply having "poor vision" or labeled as lazy students, when in fact they were battling an undiagnosed, debilitating condition that causes progressively worsening vision that negatively impacts their ability to learn at school, their social environment and their confidence. However with early diagnosis and the correct management we can help to change that narrative.

With a good clinical examination and the use of the Pentacam, we are now able to diagnose keratoconus accurately and stage the disease, this allows us to develop a management plan that is individualised to each patient. Starting patients on topical drops to manage their symptoms has become routine care. For more advanced cases, we've been able to offer corneal cross-linking surgery, which halts the progression of the disease and prevents further deterioration of vision. In May we were able to offer our first (and much needed) corneal cross-linking list for 2025. Under the guidance of a corneal specialist from the USA we were able to assist 9 patients from across sub-Saharan Africa (the oldest was 22 and the youngest was 15, we had patients from Eswatini, Mozambique and South Africa) all traveling through for this sight preserving surgery. It was an incredible experience learning how to perform the surgery and our hope in the near future is to be able to offer this procedure to our patients throughout the year.

But the journey doesn't end there. With proper glasses and scleral contact lenses, many of our patients are now seeing clearly—some for the first time in years. We recently saw 3 of our patients for follow-up and to see them now symptom free, no longer worrying if their eye sight would continue to be taken from them, finally seeing, functioning and thriving has been such an motivating experience. Guiding a patient from diagnosis through to treatment and rehabilitation, and witnessing the joy on their face as their world comes into focus, is a privilege that constantly renews my passion for this work. Your support has allowed me to become a more knowledgeable and skilled doctor, better able to help our patients. Thank you for standing by me on this journey. I am very excited to see what the next 6 months bring.

Every day is an opportunity to work a little harder, learn something new, practice and refine a skill and help another patient. I am so incredibly grateful for this experience and strive to make the most of every moment. Thank you again for your on-going support and belief in my abilities.

CURRENT STUDIES

In the middle of July I wrote the first paper for my Diploma in Ophthalmology and am happy to report that I passed which has gained me admission into the oral component of the exam, which will be written later in the year.

Dr Ryan and I were incredibly fortunate to register and attend the Harvard Lancaster Course in Ophthalmology which is a 5-week online program that is presented by world-leading experts in the field of ophthalmology which covers a wide range of topics including anatomy, pathology, optics and other sub-specialty fields. The lectures and notes have been a great addition to my diploma studies and begun to prepare me for my Ophthalmology primary exams. It is so inspiring learning from some of the 'rock-stars' of Ophthalmology.



CONTINUED LEARNING

In mid-September I will have the incredible opportunity to go to Cape Town for the first cataract microsurgical course (MSIC). This will place me one step closer to starting to perform cataract surgeries. Further I am continuing to improve my technique with laser treatments (SLT, YAG and PRP).

Once I have completed my Diploma in Ophthalmology I will be studying towards writing my Primary exams in Ophthalmology which I am hoping to write in early February of 2026.