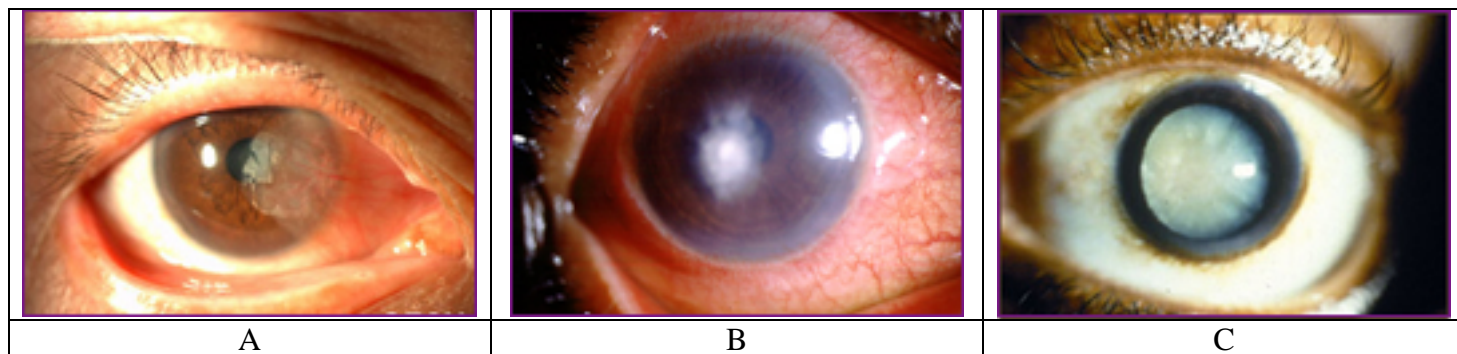


Can You Identify the Cataract?



I was recently asked to give a talk at a local Assisted Living establishment, and assumed that I would be speaking to people that lived there, but instead found myself talking to a group of medical professionals...nurses, therapists, and caregivers. My first slide was a slide of 3 pictures that you see above. Only one of the professionals at the seminar answered correctly. So I thought this would be a great topic to write about to my newspaper friends.

A Cataract is a clouding that occurs to the normally clear human lens usually due to age. The lens is about the size of a medium lima bean and sits just behind the iris which is the colored part of the eye. There are other reasons for cataracts to form such as diabetes, steroid use, and trauma, but most commonly they just occur with age.

Surgery is the only way to fix a cataract. It is performed when the patient can no longer perform functions that he/she normally would and interferes with the patient's quality of life. That point is somewhat different for all people, but there is also a second requirement. That requirement is a medical guideline which must be met as well to qualify for insurance coverage of cataract surgery. Once both guidelines are met, the patient is a candidate for removal of their cataract if they desire better vision.

Modern cataract surgery is quick, painless, and very successful in general. Most patients have fast visual recovery and minimal activity limitations, and those limitations are generally for only one week. There is a 1 in 1000 risk of visual loss with the surgery and this is most commonly due to post-operative infection. A plastic implant is placed in the eye during surgery to "put back" the optical power of the human lens that was removed.

The most common outcome is to provide distance vision to the patient as close to glasses-free as possible and they generally wear readers for near tasks afterwards such as reading. Recently there has been some other implants that can give near and far vision to the patients instead of just far. These types of implants have the best chance to eliminate all need for glasses, but there are some drawbacks. These drawbacks include increased glare, decreased contrast, and usually include increased out-of-pocket expense. These implants are NOT for everyone, and you should ask your eye doctor which type of implant might be right for you if you ever need cataract surgery.

Oh yeah....and the correct answer is C.

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