

Florida Eye Doctor Helps Legally Blind to See Again

Specialist in Low Vision Care helps those with Macular Degeneration to keep reading, writing, playing cards... enjoying life!

By Lois Neinkin, *Freelance Writer*

Just because you have macular degeneration or other eye disease like diabetic retinopathy doesn't mean you must give up your favorite activities.

Ever look through a pair of field glasses or binoculars? Things look bigger and closer, and much easier to see. Florida optometrist, Dr. Marc Jay Gannon, is using miniaturized binoculars or telescopes to help people who have lost vision from macular degeneration or other eye conditions.

"Some of my patients consider me the last stop for people who have vision loss," said Dr. Gannon, a low vision specialist with offices in Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Boca Raton, West Palm Beach and Stuart.

"People don't know that there are doctors who are very experienced in low vision care." Dr. Gannon is a panel member of the Florida Division of Blind Services and the International Society for Low Vision



Patient Bobbie Seidman using tele-microscopic glasses for reading, writing, playing cards, etc.

Research and Rehabilitation. Dr. Gannon is the founder and director of the Low Vision Institute and the American Foundation of Low Vision Rehabilitation.

Macular Degeneration is the most common eye disease amongst the senior population. As many as 25% of those over 65 have some degree of degeneration. The macula is one small part of the entire retina, but it is the most sensitive part and gives us sharp images. When it degenerates, macular degeneration leaves a blind spot right in the center of vision making it impossible to recognize faces, read a book, or pass the driver's test.

The experts do not know what causes

macular degeneration. But it is known that UV light from the sun is a major contributing factor. Other factors are smoking, aging of course, and improper nutrition, and 15 to 20% of the time it is genetic.

There are two types, wet and dry. The wet type involves leaky blood vessels which may be able to be treated. Unfortunately, it may only result in a temporary fix as other leaks usually occur.

"Our job is to figure out everything and anything possible to keep a person functioning," says Dr. Gannon.

Donald Paquette, 72, a former county assessor from Anaheim, California was seen last November. "I could not read the street signs soon enough when driving and I couldn't read my saxophone music anymore."

The Doctor fit him with bioptic telescope glasses. "Amazing!" says Donald. "I can read the street signs twice as far as I did before. I can play my sax again. Happy Day!"

Dr. Gannon also provides special microscope reading glasses to make the newspaper print much easier to read.

Dorothy Weston, 80 from Broward County, Florida was unable to perform her

job as a bookkeeper before visiting Dr. Gannon. She received a pair of tele-microscopic glasses for reading spreadsheets and viewing the computer. "I am thrilled to be able to keep working," said Dorothy.

"A while back I worked with a world class tournament bridge player who could no longer see the cards in her hand or on the table," said Gannon. "I created a special split tele-microscopic system for her, designed to function like a bifocal. The top part allowed her to see the cards on the table and the bottom was for her hand."

Telescope glasses usually cost over \$2,000, says Gannon, especially if we build them with an automatic sunglass.

Ellen Imboden traveled from Sweden and was helped with two pair of glasses; special \$475 prismatic glasses, that let her read newsprint, as well as bioptic telescopes to continue driving in Sweden.

Low Vision devices are not always expensive. Some reading glasses cost as little as \$475 and some magnifiers \$100. Every case is different because people have different levels of vision and different desires.

Dr. Gannon can be reached Toll Free at 1-866-942-2020 or you can visit Dr. Gannon at www.lowvisioninstitute.com

Free seminars for senior centers and retirement facilities are available.