

ENHANCING EYES

BY KAYCE TEO



Oculoplastics, also known as oculo-facial surgery, is plastic surgery around the eyelids and face. Besides treating abnormalities of the eyelids and the surrounding tissue, oculoplastic surgeons also do aesthetic treatments and surgery on normal-looking eyelids to improve or change their look.

Dr Elaine Chee, a visiting consultant at the Singapore National Eye Centre, specialises in this field and practises at Eye and Retina Surgeons at Camden Medical Centre. The clinic recently celebrated their sixth anniversary and the launch of a new operating facility for oculoplastic surgeries, as well as laser procedures for facial rejuvenation and resurfacing such as IPL CO2 lasers. We talk to Dr Chee to find out more.

What motivated you to specialise in oculoplastics?

As a child, I was always interested in arts and crafts, and loved doing fine work with my hands. During my ophthalmology training, I was immediately drawn to oculoplastics as I loved how I could create different

results with the surgeries I performed, with a touch of art, beauty and science. Moreover, it covers a very broad range of conditions, from eyelids to diseases of the bone structures around the eyes, and even tumours and damaged tear systems. I also enjoy the never-ending possibilities and challenges that it brings.

What are the more prevalent oculoplastic conditions?

The more common conditions happen because of ageing, such as droopy eyelids, eyebags, eyelid malposition and tearing due to blocked tear ducts. I also see a fair number of children who are born with droopy lids, otherwise known as ptosis, or children who come in with complaints of tearing and discomfort due to in-turned eyelashes.

Increasingly, I am seeing more patients who wish to have double-eyelid surgeries, Botox, fillers and other laser procedures which aid in facial rejuvenation. This was also more prevalent in Korea where I did my further sub-speciality training under the Ministry of Health Scholarship.

What are the different types of oculoplastic surgeries?

Surgery around the eyelids and mid-face, bypass surgeries for blocked tear ducts, operations for tumours and repair of fractures of the bones surrounding the eye.

What are the more common degenerative eye problems?

Sagging and drooping of eyelids and the development of cataracts and age-related macular degeneration.

Is there anything that we can do to slow down the degenerative process?

Genes play a part in how fast a person ages. However, we can help to slow our body's ageing process by leading a healthy lifestyle and taking a well-balanced diet that is high in carotenoids, a compound present in carrots and sweet potatoes, and dark green leafy vegetables.

Not smoking also helps to slow the ageing process. And applying sunblock liberally protects against ultraviolet rays and reduces the chances of sun-related damage to the skin, wrinkle formation and sagging dry skin.

Wearing sunglasses with UV protection also helps in reducing cataract formation and age-related macular degeneration development.

Is there any advice you can give to help us take care of our eyes better?

Our stressful lifestyle combined with the constant use of smartphones and tablets put a strain on the health of our eyes. Frequent breaks from these devices will stave off myopia. UV protection and a well-balanced diet from a young age will also help to protect our eyes.

What is your most interesting experience so far?

We often treat patients who have come from overseas and have been treated by various doctors before, but without much success. I had a patient with severe thyroid eye disease who had seen several doctors

before but to no avail. By the time she came to me, she was rather depressed and frustrated about her condition and treatment.

It wasn't easy, as she had tried several other treatments with various doctors. I have been treating her for several months now, with combined consult with her endocrinologist. Together, we managed to control her thyroid eye disease and she now comes in to my clinic with a smile and finally feels that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Seeing my patients emerge from their disease with confidence never fails to bring a smile to my face and makes me feel that this is what I was meant to do.



Dr Elaine Chee (bottom right) is the latest addition to a team of eye specialists comprising (from top row, extreme left, clockwise) Dr Ronald Yeoh, Dr Adrian Koh, Dr Chan Wing Kwong, Dr Ong Sze Guan, Dr Ang Beng Chong and Dr Goh Swee Heng.



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