

# Shannon Medical Center's Angelo Laser Eye Center

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Bad vision plagued Gina Munn for most of her life, but things took a turn for the worse last year when an infection developed after she had surgery to correct a crossed eye.

The infection impaired her vision so badly, the San Angelo woman was told, that contact lenses wouldn't be sufficient to correct her vision. She could see only through thick, heavy eyeglasses.

"I was completely devastated when I was told I would have to go back to wearing my glasses," said 42-year-old Munn, a technical director and radiation therapist at Regional Cancer Treatment Center. "Glasses are a huge hindrance, especially since I've been wearing contacts since sixth grade."

All that has changed now, thanks to a surgical procedure that recently arrived in San Angelo.

The extreme myopia - nearsightedness - Munn was experiencing made everything that wasn't close look like a blurry blob of colors. When she woke up, she would have to put the alarm clock inches from her eyes to make out the time. The infection made things worse by giving her double vision.

"I can't remember seeing without correction," she said. "I remember not being able to see the board in second grade, and getting my first pair of glasses."

She wore hard contact lenses in her middle school years and went on to soft contact lenses by her senior year in high school. She had been wearing the soft contacts up until she was told she couldn't.

Years earlier, Munn turned to Shannon Medical Center's Angelo Laser Eye Center and sought to correct her vision through Lasik eye surgery, but was told her condition was too bad to qualify for that type of procedure. Then a new procedure, Implantable Collamer Lens surgery, came around and still she was turned down because her vision hadn't deteriorated enough to warrant that type of procedure.

After learning soft contacts were no longer an option for her, she went back to the Angelo Eye Center and received some good news. She was told Dr. Daniel Wilson would be able to perform the ICL procedure on her.

"Collamer is an organic material that is completely biocompatible with the inside of the eye, never rejected," Wilson said. "Its not used for a high percentage of people. There are some people that are not good candidates for Lasik that get recommended for the surgery. Then there is some overlap where some patients are treated with both, but mostly patients are not eligible for Lasik."

Wilson is a pioneer himself when it comes to vision correction procedures. He was part of the panel that helped bring Lasik surgery to the United States. He talked before the FDA in Washington, D.C., to push for approval of the surgical process. He gained personal approval himself after getting the procedure done on his eyes in Canada in the mid-1990s.

Wilson feels the same confidence about ICL surgery as he did when he started performing Lasik procedures.

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The surgery was approved domestically a couple of years ago and Wilson is the only ophthalmologist in West Texas who does the procedure.

"The good thing about (ICL surgery) is the technique is almost identical to cataract surgery, and I've done thousands of those," he said. "In cataract surgery, we take the lens out and replace it; this process is only inserting a lens."

Munn came in a week before the surgery so Wilson could perform a YAG laser iridotomy as preparation for the ICL procedure. A YAG laser is used to make one or two small openings near the edge of the iris, openings which serve as outlets that will allow the eye's fluid to circulate around the lens and deter pressure buildup.

"Most patients are able to read and pass driver's license tests hours after," said Renee Howard, Laser vision coordinator at Angelo Laser Eye Center, about the speed of recovery after an ICL surgery.

"This is going to be awesome, I am really excited," Munn said in the hours leading up to her surgery. "I really despise my glasses - I can't wait to see the difference."

The surgery began with Wilson numbing the eyes with eye drops and inserting a gel-like material to protect the eye during lens placement. After the gel was placed, a 3 mm-wide incision was made on the eye with a diamond-edged tool. The contact lens, which is precisely rolled up onto a cartridge similar to a syringe, is inserted on the edge of the cornea. After the lens was placed in the correct position, Wilson tucked the four corners of the lens under the iris while looking through a microscope.

Immediately after Wilson was finished with the right eye, he asked Munn to look at the ceiling, which was about six feet away. She could distinguish the panels and see that one had grating. She couldn't make out the type of grating at the time, but said she saw with better definition. Wilson said he would test her right eye again after he was finished with the left eye.

The procedure for the right eye took only a few minutes once the incision was made. Astigmatism in the left eye made the procedure in that eye a bit longer than the right one. After Wilson was finished with the left eye he asked Munn if she could make out the grating on the ceiling panel.

"It's a circular grating," she said, and was able to tell that the panel was secured with Phillips screws.

Wilson raised her bed and asked her to read the clock on the wall across the room. Munn was able to read from 10 feet away.

"Thank you, everybody," she said. "This is amazing."

Munn said she felt slight pressure at times during the surgery, but overall it was pain-free.

In a follow-up eye check an hour after the surgery, Munn's eyes tested 20/25 in the right eye and 20/40 in the left eye. The follow-up appointment the next day revealed Munn was seeing with 20/20 vision.

Munn said she still has urges to grab her glasses when she wakes up in the morning to look at her alarm clock, but she aims to break that habit. She said her vision is sharp and that not worrying about glasses or contacts is a big relief.

"It was definitely worth it," she said. "When you're dealing with somebody's vision that's a big deal, and I feel that they strive for perfection there."

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