

First Business

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InFront

Local ophthalmologist is sharpening the cutting edge

Arun Gulani and a groundbreaking machine, the Pentacam, are making Lasik eye surgery safer.

By **URVAKSH KARKARIA**
The Times-Union

Jacksonville ophthalmologist Arun Gulani claims to be the first in Northeast Florida to use imaging technology that better identifies eye conditions that make patients unsuitable for the ever-popular Lasik eye surgery.

The device, known as the Pentacam, takes pictures of the cornea and the anterior segment of the eye, the space between the cornea and the lens, from multiple angles, said Gulani, medical director of the Gulani Vision Institute. It then reconstructs the images in

three dimensions.

Unlike conventional technology, which reveals the shape of the cornea, the \$52,000 device also provides detailed information including the cornea's size, thickness and anatomical relation to the anterior segment. That detail helps ophthalmologists better identify conditions like abnormally thin corneas which make the patient an unsuitable candidate for laser vision surgery, Gulani said.

"The whole spectrum of refractive surgery [surgery to remove the need for glasses] is further refined by this technology," said Gulani, who was the

first in the state to perform an artificial corneal transplant.

Gulani, 38, is not passing on the cost of the device to patients through higher fees, referring to the expense as an "investment in quality care."

That commitment to patient safety and quality care has helped Gulani's practice nearly double in patient volume in the past year.

The institute performs about 20 laser vision surgeries — including Lasik procedures — each month and is a referral center for Lasik surgeons nationwide.

Gulani, who readily hands out

his cellphone number to patients, advertises his practice as being "high tech with high touch."

But his services don't come cheap.

"We're known as one of the most expensive eye surgeons in the country," he said.

Yet, patients from Beverley Hills to New York are drawn to Gulani's 15 years of experience performing laser vision surgery.

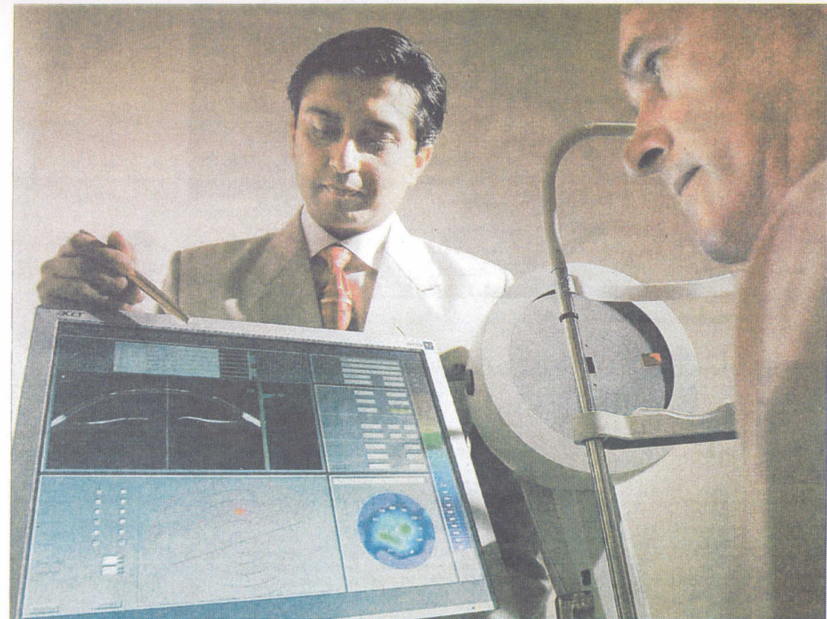
Gulani has "mastered some of the newest and most innovative surgical techniques for being able to restore vision," said Jeffrey Shearer, optometrist with Deerwood Family Eyecare.

Gulani, a native of India, travels to national and international conferences once a month where he talks about the latest developments in Lasik and laser vision technology. Gulani also hosts surgeons from as far as South Africa and Thailand who visit the local institute to observe and learn advanced laser vision techniques.

The ophthalmologist said he is fueled by his passion to educate and deliver quality care.

"This is not work to me at all," Gulani said. "This is something I enjoy."

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Arun Gulani of the Gulani Vision Institute, a major provider of Lasik surgeries, uses the Pentacam, which helps a physician identify patients with eye conditions that make them unsuitable for laser vision surgery. This new machine provides the physician a complete look at the eye, mapping out all its parts. Gulani and patient Harry Watts go over some of the readings.

DON BURK/ The Times-Union