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Physician Spotlight

Kirk Jeffreys, MD

By LUCY SCHULTZE

Kirk Jeffreys, MD, can trace his interest in ophthalmology back to childhood visits to New Orleans, where his family made a welcome event out of their annual eye exams.

His great-uncle, Porter Puryear, MD, was a respected ophthalmologist in the city.

"We would always have the late-morning appointments, and then my uncle would take us to one of the great New Orleans restaurants, like Galatoire's or Brennan's," Jeffreys recalled.

"All of that made a huge impression — seeing how he worked and how well-respected he was. Since my early years, I had ophthalmology in the back of my mind, and as I progressed through medical school, it was always at the top of my list."

Three decades later, Jeffreys is enjoying his own ophthalmology practice, Eyecare Professionals, in his hometown of Jackson. Launched in 2002, his practice has recently expanded into a 5,000-square-foot clinic and eyewear boutique in former location of local landmark Nick's restaurant.

"We're now on the ground floor, and we have a ton of parking," Jeffreys said. "It's a really convenient experience for our patients, and we've had an overwhelmingly positive response."

The clinic had been situated on the second floor of the same building for the nine years Jeffreys has been practicing in Jackson. He spent the prior three years in Tupelo after completing his residency in 1999.

Jackson has been his family's home since his middle-school years, when his family relocated from Yazoo City. Jeffreys completed his undergraduate studies at Mississippi State University, followed by medical school and residency at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

He also completed the basic sciences course in ophthalmology from Harvard



University. Jeffreys is certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology with a special interest in cataract and refractive surgery.

He is a member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons, and is also past president and past secretary-treasurer of the Jackson Ophthalmological Society.

For Jeffreys, it's been a blessing to practice in a specialty that supports family life. He and his wife, Tracey, are the parents of John, 12, Mary Riels, 9, and Ramsey, 8. Most of his time outside of work is focused on his children — helping with homework, coaching sports teams, shuttling to soccer practice and dance class.

"Some of the other specialties are a little more demanding time-wise and call-wise," he said. "I also enjoy the really detailed aspect of ophthalmology. The surgery that we do is detailed and very technologically advanced. It's a lot of fun for me, and it's nice, clean work with good hours."

The technology in his field continues to evolve at a dizzying pace. In the past

year, Jeffreys became one of the first ophthalmologists in the area to begin offering IntraLase "blade-free" Lasik procedures.

The new option replaces the use of a microkeratome blade in the first step of the procedure, the creation of the corneal flap. The physician uses tiny pulses of laser light to create a layer of microscopic bubbles beneath the surface of the eye, after which the IntraLase laser stacks bubbles around the corneal diameter to create the edges of the flap.

"It allows for thinner and more precise corneal flaps, and fewer potential complications," Jeffreys said. "It also allows some potential patients who may not have been candidates for traditional Lasik to be candidates for the blade-free procedure. I think it's definitely the future of Lasik, and we wanted to be among the first to offer it."

The entire procedure takes about 10 minutes.

Jeffreys has also been offering premium implants for cataract surgery, making up about 30 percent of his cataract cases today. The premium options include the toric implant to correct astigmatism,

and a multifocal implant which can eliminate the need for distance glasses or reading glasses.

With each stride in technology, patients marvel at the difference such swift procedures can make in their lives.

"I operate on Mondays and I love to come in Tuesday morning, when it's just like a big party in the waiting room," Jeffreys said. "People are happy and excited to be seeing so well. The technology allows us to do things in such a quicker and better way now than we used to be able to."

For Jeffreys and his staff of 10, doubling the size of their space with a new, modern facility has also enabled them to take better care of their patients.

"When Nick's announced they were moving to the Fondren area, I jumped at the opportunity to move down to the space," Jeffreys said. "It's turned out great. The architects, designers and contractors did a really good job. The space has a great flow and a really efficient layout."

The new space also opened up the opportunity to launch a new optical shop. Christened the EyeBar, its name was inspired by its location where the Nick's bar used to be.

"The shop blends in with our main front waiting room, so there's a convenience factor in that you can browse and shop while you wait," Jeffreys said. "It's got a great selection, and we've added a lot of high-end brands you find in boutique shops."

The shop stocks designer brands such as Ralph Lauren, Brooks Brothers and Costa Del Mar, including a range of sunwear choices for fashion, sports and everyday needs.

While some of Jeffreys' patients hail from as far as surrounding states, most come to him from the central Mississippi area.

Services offered by Eyecare Professionals also include tests for and treatment of diabetic retinopathy, dry eye, glaucoma and macular degeneration, as well as exams to assess vision and focus ability.