

VISION FITNESS

Dr. Richard Lodwick
Vision Health Through
All Stages of Life



Greg Lilly

by Greg Lilly, Lifestyle Editor

Dr. Richard Lodwick says, “If you’re not visually fit, you’re not physically fit.” You know this as you squint at the road sign on the highway or hold a prescription bottle at arm’s length to read the label. Dr. Lodwick works with patients at all stages of life to improve vision health whether it’s an infant’s first vision examination, a school athlete’s depth perception, or a diabetes patient’s routine checkup at the local clinic.

When Dr. Lodwick attended Ohio State University, he worked with the school’s athletic department to test the vision of the athletes. “If you’re not seeing the best you can on the field,” he says, “then you’re already at a disadvantage.” That’s true on the athletic field and in life.

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*Based on a stratified sample of 94 men over a six-year period.

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A few years ago, Dr. Lodwick and his practice partner, Dr. Pamela Lundberg, started volunteering their time at the Olde Towne Medical Center as part of the diabetes program.

"We run a diabetic eye clinic," he explains. "The patients we see there have diabetes. It's one of the leading causes of blindness."

They monitor the patients for any potential problems that would require a referral to the Medical College of Virginia (MCV) or a local retina specialist.

"The very first person we checked when we started the program had signs of diabetic retinopathy and needed to be referred to MCV. That made the program worth it right there," he says.

That screening helped save someone's sight. Dr. Lodwick might examine 20 to 30 diabetics each month and maybe one to three needs a referral.

"We want to assess their vision health," he adds, "and establish a plan to monitor them to keep diabetic blindness out of their future."

Dr. Lodwick grew up in Ohio and by the sixth grade, he knew he wanted to be a doctor.

"I wasn't sure at that time what kind," he says, "maybe primary care. I started wearing glasses and contact lenses at the age of fourteen." As he neared graduation with an undergraduate degree in Biology/Pre-Medicine at Bluffton University, he thought about what specialty held an interest for him.

"The eye just fascinated me," he explains. "'The window to the soul', it's been called. I followed a couple of optometrists around and decided that's what I wanted to do."

Dr. Lodwick married and started a family. Then he and his wife decided to move somewhere warmer than Ohio and find a friendly place to raise their three children.

"We looked around at a few other locations. I spoke with the Director of the Virginia Optometric Association on a Friday. That following Monday, he had spoken to my future partner, Pam, and that set things in motion." Within that fateful weekend, his path took a southern turn.

Mother Nature threw a surprise at Dr. Lodwick and his family in the form of a hurricane. "We came down for our first visit the week-

end after Hurricane Isabel in 2003," he says. "Despite the downed trees and devastation - out here [Bulifants Boulevard] only this office suite and Ferguson's building were here; there was a tree on this building and a sofa in the middle of Mooretown Road - the damage was widespread, but we loved Williamsburg." He accepted the partnership in the practice and moved his family south.

Settled in Williamsburg, Dr. Lodwick says his focus is vision health throughout his patients' lives or "primary eye care from infants to geriatrics" as he likes to say. With each stage of life, different eye issues take the spotlight.

INFANTS:

Dr. Lodwick participates in the American Optometric Association's public health InfantSEE program. He places high importance on vision health in childhood development and wants to provide that healthy start for all infants. "We assess an infant's vision between the ages of 8 to 12 months," he explains. "We look for normal development, eye coordination, no large amounts of farsightedness or nearsightedness."

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CHILDHOOD:

“Amblyopia is the main issue that children deal with and that’s what we look for,” Dr. Lodwick says. “Two to three percent of children are diagnosed with amblyopia.” Also known as Lazy Eye, it’s defined as one eye seeing better than the other but that imbalance is not due to pathology, cataract, or any other eye problem. “It can cause the eye to turn in and the brain starts to favor an eye,” he describes. “We treat that with either drops or patching. We have until the age of nine to treat it.”

Certainly astigmatism plays a role in that as well. All three of those will be refractive errors where light is not hitting the back of the eye appropriately.” Corrective lenses remedy these conditions.

FORTIES:

“As we roll into the forties, we hit presbyopia where we start to lose the ability to focus. That’s difficult,” he adds. “It’s something that we all deal with as we age.” An additional health matter is diabetic retinopathy. This is

eyes examined at least once a year.”

FIFTIES AND ABOVE:

“Cataracts are gradual,” Dr. Lodwick says. “Cataracts are one of the leading causes of blindness in this country. I can’t think of any other surgery that’s performed more than cataract surgery.”

Cataracts are the clouding of the lens. “The opacification of the lens that allows us to focus,” he explains. “One theory is that as that lens hardens, we start to lose our ability to focus and

as it continues to harden, it becomes yellow, it opacifies. There are different kinds of cataracts, but as we roll

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- Dr. Richard Lodwick

TEENS, TWENTIES, THIRTIES:

“Visual stress is the main concern,” Dr. Lodwick says, “due to myopia, which is nearsightedness, or hyperopia, which is farsightedness.

his concentration at the Olde Towne Medical Center. “It’s a leading cause of blindness, if not the leading cause of blindness for patients under sixty. Diabetic patients need to have their

into our sixties, certainly, that’s when we start to see the majority of cataracts, and into our seventies. By the eighties, most people will probably have cataract surgery to have them

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removed.”

According to Dr. Lodwick, cataract surgery is a quality of life issue. “At what point are you not happy with what you see?” he asks. That’s the time to discuss cataract surgery with your optometrist.

“Most of the things that affect vi-

sion are painless. The photoreceptors do not sense pain; they sense light in the back of the eye.” This is a difference that most of us don’t think about - deteriorating vision health doesn’t necessarily cause physical pain.

He offers some tips to help keep eyes healthy. First, people with diabetes must keep their sugar under control and see their optometrist once a year.

Secondly, even though cataracts are a part of aging, they can be deterred. Dr. Lodwick cites a study of the 1950s Chesapeake Bay wa-

termen. “It helped show UV (Ultraviolet) rays cause cataracts,” he explains. “They found that the men on the water longer throughout the day developed cataracts at a younger age than

Preventive UV eye protection helps slow the progression of cataracts.

“The best thing about my profession is that about 90% of the patients I see, I can answer

Most of the things that affect vision are painless. The photoreceptors do not sense pain; they sense light in the back of the eye.

- Dr. Richard Lodwick

a control group.” This led to the development of UV absorbing sunglasses and it’s still a smart idea to wear them when you go outside, even for the youngest among us.

“When we’re younger,” he adds, “our pupils are larger than when we are in our forties and fifties, so a lot of light gets in there. We’re younger, we’re outside more, our pupils are big, so more sun gets in. My kids wear sunglasses when they’re outdoors and have since they were very young. Will they still get cataracts? Probably, but hopefully at a later age in life.”

their chief complaints,” Dr. Lodwick says. That satisfaction of helping a patient see better, giving the patient a clear vision, a depth of vision, or preventing a potentially serious development in vision health are rewards of the profession.

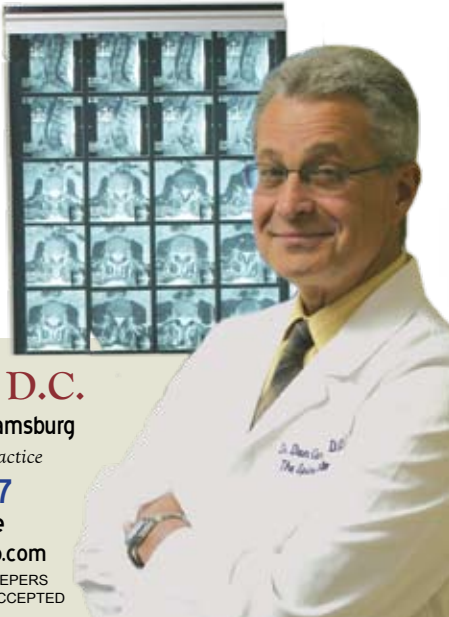
He has one that tops them all: “Seeing kids when they first put those glasses on and can see clearly. They look around and there’s a smile on their face. That’s the best reward.” Visually fit and ready to conquer the world. NDN

STENOSIS?

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