

Spotlight on Success

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New Owner of Eyewear Plus Optometric Center Optometrist Dr. Gregory Schultz Focuses Finding, Treating Eye Problems

By K. H. Queen

When optometrist Dr. Gregory Schultz sees patients, he focuses not on his watch but on the subtle changes in the eye to diagnose challenging eye problems.

"It is challenging to me when a patient tells me 'I have seen three other doctors and they can't tell me what's wrong,'" Schultz says. "I have a genuine interest in people. I have a genuine interest in diagnosing disease. I have an insatiable curiosity. I make it my priority to solve their health issues. It is the most rewarding thing I can do for my patients."

Schultz purchased Eyewear Plus Optometric Center near New Town from Dr. William C. Sutherland last month. Schultz brings decades of experience both in general optometry and in key specialties of glaucoma, retinal disorders, neuro-ophthalmic disease and corneal disease. After graduating from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry with honors, Schultz devoted 20 years to working with leading specialty optometrists, ophthalmologists, and sub specialists in medicine to gain expertise in some of the most difficult aspects of eye care. He spent years offering second (or even third) opinions on eye problems referred by hundreds of fellow optometrists and ophthalmologists in New Jersey, New York, Tennessee and Virginia.

diagnosed a stroke. Based on minor eye symptoms, he has diagnosed scores of people with MS who didn't know they had it. Other times, patients' eye issues have indicated brain tumors and he has ordered the necessary tests to confirm that diagnosis.

Schultz also diagnoses hard-to-catch, sight-threatening eye problems, such as a woman he recently diagnosed with pseudoexfoliative glaucoma—a condition that went undiagnosed for several years. Elevated eye pressure signals some types of glaucoma, but other kinds are detected only on thorough, specific examination. "These patients often have normal pressure in the doctor's office and then have high spikes later at night," he says. "These patients have been flying under the radar for years." Once diagnosed, glaucoma can be treated with no further loss of vision. But the vision lost up until detection can't be reversed.

He also treats conditions, such as corneal infections, that ophthalmologists and optometrists typically refer to cornea specialists. "I culture my patients to find

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Sutherland chose to sell the practice to Schultz, who he has known for 12 years, after interviewing a number of other potential buyers. "He is very intelligent, bright and articulate," Sutherland says. "He is a very patient-oriented doctor."

Schultz is alert to patients whose eye problems can be an early warning signal that something seemingly unrelated is wrong throughout the body. For example after seeing one patient recently, Schultz

to respond to," he says. "When you're dealing with an infection in the center of your cornea, you don't have time to guess wrong. If you guess wrong, you could develop a scar that affects your vision permanently."

Of course, "Not every patient presents with complicated eye diseases sometimes they just want to see well or better," Schultz says. "I take great pride in providing them with prescription eye glasses and lenses that do just that."



Dr. Gregory Schultz

After the recent American Academy of Optometry meeting in Seattle, "I was so impressed by new data on the success of bifocal contact lenses and I plan on making that a large part of my practice," Schultz says.

In addition to his breadth and depth of clinical experience, Schultz's excellent chair side manner and the extra time he spends with patients as needed enable him to develop a great rapport with patients. That relationship is critical not just because it makes the appointment a better experience but because that trust that develops allows Schultz to find out what he needs to know for a better, more complete diagnosis.

A doctor's personality matters, Schultz says, because many patients don't realize the impact a small visual problem can have. If a doctor is rushing a patient through the office, the patient may not mention important symptoms or issues, he says.

"When you see a doctor he or she needs to spend time with you to do a thorough job, especially when it's complicated," Schultz says. "When a patient comes into my office, I have to look at total eye health and then I have to hone it down and find any problems."

Schultz also is investing in the practice with advanced equipment including an optical coherence tomography (OCT) machine to diagnose eye conditions including macular holes and puckers, age-related macular degeneration and diabetic complications. He likens it to an MRI for the eye.

He is a Fellow in the American Academy of Optometry with specialties in ocular disease, glaucoma and retina problems. He also is one of two area optometrists who are board certified by the American Board of Optometry. He teaches students, residents, and fellow optometrists and has given 150 lectures internationally. He stays current in new studies and research.

"To best help my patients, I want to be at the pinnacle of what my profession can offer," Schultz says.

in focus...

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