

I always thought that it was a shame that I had two vision coverages (my husband's employment and mine) and never used them. I was late into my 50's and didn't wear glasses. Why should I go to the eye doctor? I had monovision. My left eye was used for distance and my right eye was used for reading. This has worked for me since I was a teenager.

Late last summer, my brother-in-law—an optometrist—suggested I get glasses for driving only. He couldn't do the exam since he lived out of state. Using two eyes while driving made sense to me. I made an appointment at Broad View Eye Center to see Dr. Kosunick. During the exam, Dr. Kosunick found a choroidal nevus on the back of my eye. These are also more commonly called "freckles" or "warts". Dr. Kosunick referred me to the Retina Associates of Cleveland. These choroidal nevi can turn into ocular melanomas.

Diagnosis was impaired because the history of this "freckle" was unknown. If I had been examined yearly--as I should have been--there would have been pictures and a history of the freckle. The doctors would have known if the "freckle" had changed from year to year. They decided to have me return in two months to determine if my "freckle" was changing.

At the next appointment, Dr. Zakov, at Retina Associates noticed some changes. He called Dr. Singh at the Cleveland Clinic Cole Eye Institute. I had an appointment three days later. Dr. Singh informed me that the "freckle" was an ocular melanoma. An ocular melanoma is a malignant tumor that can spread to the rest of the body. Fortunately, it was caught early and I didn't have any symptoms—which would have come later. I entered the hospital a week later and a radioactive plaque was implanted behind my eye for four days. This therapy was chosen to attempt to save the eye. My vision in that eye was 20/25.

This occurred two weeks ago today. I have not lost any vision in that eye. (I have been told that I may lose some vision in a few years.) There is no evidence that the melanoma spread—a determination made after a CT scan. I have been told that the procedure followed results in a success rate of from 95-98%. I also had laser therapy to increase the success rate of the previous procedure. I may have two more laser treatments. I will be monitored closely in the next few years.

Many family members and friends have made appointments to have their eyes examined even though they don't wear glasses. My story has a happy ending, but if I had waited a few years, the story could be much different.

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