

Brits Eye Up Laser Surgery Abroad with 60% Surge in Overseas Enquiries

- Overseas enquiries for LASIK have doubled in the past year
- Worldwide interest in LASIK up 40%
- Demand for LASIK up 88% with an increasing number of UK patients travelling overseas for the treatment
- Enquiries for laser eye surgeon consultations in overseas clinics increased by 42%
- Worldwide demand for laser eye clinics increased by 21%

21st November, 2016 – Brits are looking abroad for laser eye procedures, with enquiries into overseas clinics up 60% over the past 12 months, according to WhatClinic.com. LASIK, a specific type of laser surgery, was of particular interest with UK enquiries to overseas clinics doubling in the last year, up 100%. Globally, enquiries for laser eye procedures increased by 21% since 2015.

The two most popular types of laser eye surgery are LASIK and LASEK. In LASIK procedures, a cool beam of light from an excimer laser is used to slightly reshape the front surface (cornea) of the eye. LASEK involves the removal of the top layer of the cornea as a flap-like sheet, before re-sculpting the cornea with a laser. LASIK is the more popular of the two as it is a more straightforward procedure and has a faster recovery time. However, LASIK is not always the optimal choice for all patients; for those with thin corneas, or who are involved in contact sports, LASEK can be more appropriate.

Enquiries for all laser eye procedures from UK users to clinics at home and abroad are up 17%, and for those searching for LASIK treatment, enquiries increased by 88% since 2015. Though 862 clinics in the UK offer the procedure, more Brits have been going abroad for treatment. Additionally, enquiries for consultations with laser eye surgeons in overseas clinics have also increased over the past 12 months, up 42% on the 2015 figures.

This trend could be attributed to cost, as the average price of LASIK in the UK is £1,605, but for those willing to travel the cost can decrease dramatically. LASIK treatment costs £823, on average, in Turkey; in Spain the average price is £696; the average for LASIK in the Czech Republic is £594; and in Poland, LASIK costs just £319.

Laser eye surgery has been available since the early 90s and has become a favourite of celebrities looking for a solution to constantly having to change between glasses and contacts for shoots and shows. From Laura Whitmore to Nicole Kidman, a number of high profile actors, models and celebrities have had surgery to correct their sight over the years. Jodie Kidd, Brad Pitt and Richard Branson are some of the many celebrities who have had the procedure to rid their lives of glasses. One celebrity who has held onto his glasses despite correcting his sight is Elton John. Though the singer had corrective surgery in 2002 his wacky glasses are still a big part of his image; in 2010 he claims to still own as many as 250,000 pairs.

Mr Sheraz Daya, MD FACP FACS FRCS(Ed) FRCOphth, Medical Director, Centre for Sight London said, "LASIK laser eye surgery and vision correction procedures reliably provide patients with excellent visual results. The technology has improved considerably and is now very reliable.

Experienced surgeons understand the benefit of customising surgery to suit each individual eye on each patient and as a result, patient expectations are managed and met.

“The high adoption of the LASIK procedures is driven by the changing demographics - significantly among the young generation between the age group of 18 to 35 years. Due to peer pressure and high awareness of self-improving techniques available with cosmetic surgeries, there has been significant growth in demand for LASIK laser vision correction. Technologies have also converged and the issue is not about which technology is better but what standard of care in terms of customisation and personalisation that a patient is likely to receive.”

Commenting on the data trends in laser eye surgery in the UK and abroad, **Philip Boyle, Head of Consumer Matters, WhatClinic.com** said, “The number of people looking into laser eye surgery globally is growing significantly, according to our figures. While laser surgery is available on the NHS for certain eye conditions that can lead to loss of vision, treatment for short or nearsightedness is very rarely available on the NHS as glasses or contact lenses are considered successful treatment. This can be a factor for people considering treatment abroad.

“Medical tourism is often driven by price, but when it comes to laser eye surgery, price may not always be the main factor behind people’s travel. Many patients who are travelling for work or pleasure consider ‘adding on’ treatment when they are abroad. For example, many enquiries are being made to India, where the cost of travel really negates any savings made. Poland and the Czech Republic are also popular for LASIK. If you are considering treatment abroad, it’s important to do your research, read patient reviews and ensure the quality and credentials of the clinic you select.”

-ENDS-

Notes to editors:

References:

1. Enquiries made to 862 UK eye clinics listed on WhatClinic.com in the period 15.11-2015 - 15.11-2016, compared to 15.11-2014 - 15.11-2015.
2. Average prices are made from individual prices listed by clinics on WhatClinic.com. Clinics list treatment and prices differently on WhatClinic.com, prices usually vary widely and clinics don’t always quote for the same version of a particular procedure.

About WhatClinic.com:

WhatClinic.com is a global healthcare comparison website that enables patients to compare and review clinics across the globe, with online booking and independent price checks. With detailed listings for over 120,000 private healthcare clinics across 135 countries worldwide, WhatClinic.com helps consumers make an informed decision on elective medical treatments as conveniently as possible. WhatClinic.com was founded in 2007 by tech entrepreneur Caelen King and is headquartered in Dublin. Since its launch, over 60 million people have visited the site to find, compare and book treatments across a wide range of elective medical treatments.