

SOUTH MISSISSIPPI Living

HEALTHY LIVING i can see clearly now



Dr. Knight and Dr. Bahadur, Eye Associates of the South board certified and fellowship trained ophthalmologists.

20/20

story by **Lynn Lofton** photos by **John Stricklin**

The eyes have it at Eye Associates of the South where a complete array of eye care services are available for all ages. With offices in Biloxi, Gulfport and Ocean Springs, it's the only eye care practice on the Mississippi Gulf Coast with every ophthalmologist board certified and fellowship trained.

Although Eye Associates of the South has state-of-the-art equipment and technology along with the highest medical training, the partners stress they are not just about the clinical aspects of eye care. "We try to make people welcome and comfortable, and we treat our patients with respect," said Dr. Joel M. Knight, who founded the practice in 1986. "We love our patients."

The other partner, Dr. Rainna Bahadur agrees. "We offer excellent eye care but we're compassionate and genuinely care for our patients. We want them to do well," she said. "I like seeing all ages and getting to know families. It's all about service to someone else, and at the end of the day I feel I've done something for someone."

In addition to Knight and Bahadur, other physicians associated with the practice are Dr. Sprague Eustis, who specializes in disease and surgery of the eye, pediatric

ophthalmology and strabismus, and Dr. Mark Brown, who specializes in oculoplastics. Optometrists include Kimberly Benigno, who specializes in contact lens examinations, including hard-to-fit cases, and Joe Rhett Mitchell, III, who joined the group to provide more services at the Ocean Springs clinic.

Knight practices general ophthalmology with emphasis on cataract surgery. He is also able to deliver specialty expertise in retinal and vitreal problems. The Jackson native is a graduate of the University of Indiana and the University of Mississippi School of Medicine. He completed an internship at San Francisco General Hospital followed by a residency and specialty training at the University of Mississippi and additional specialty training at Northwestern University in Chicago. He and his wife, Sandra, live in Ocean Springs and are the parents of two sons, Stewart and Spencer.

"I was fascinated by medicine from an early age because I had two uncles who were doctors," he says. "I had bad eyes and was so glad at age 11 to put on glasses and be able to see."

He notes that too often people put off seeing an ophthalmologist until there's a problem. He recommends that adults see an eye doctor every two years and sooner if there's trouble.

"In our area, we're the allergy capital so that causes a lot of eye problems," Knight said. "Also, we have a lot of retirees. Macular degeneration is age related and we see a lot of that. If you're over age 60 and have blurred, wavy vision in objects that should be straight, that's a warning."

Dr. Bahadur is from Greenwood in the Mississippi Delta. A magna cum laude graduate of Millsaps College, she graduated from the University of Mississippi School of Medicine where she also completed an ophthalmology residency and served as chief resident. Her fellowship training was completed at the Dean McGee Eye Institute at the University of Oklahoma. She and her husband, dentist Vernon Beamon, live in Gulfport with their son, Devin, and daughter, Sohni.

"My parents immigrated from India, and medicine is a big deal in Indian families. Service to mankind is important," she said. "I have never regretted my choice and love practicing ophthalmology."

She notes that dry eye is a big part of her practice. It's prevalent here and has been especially so this year with the area's pollen counts. "Dry eye is often ignored but it can affect the eyes in many ways," she said. "As many as 25 percent of U.S. adults may be affected by dry eye or have dry eye symptoms."

Eye Associates of the South
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