

Mozambique will suffer the consequences for many years to come, just when the country was getting off its knees. The aid bonanza will have to be big indeed, and years in duration, to mean that the quality of life of the average Mozambican will "improve" as a result of the floods. They might just be able to claw back to square one.

-- Mandi Smallhorne

### **The LASIK "miracle"**

BY TATE GUNNERSON

(03/08/00)

Thanks for the very well-balanced report on LASIK. I am an optometrist who has treated many refractive surgery patients, many of whom were casualties of the RK miracle, as well as other more exotic procedures. However, whenever I see contrasts made between laser eye surgery and contact lenses, I feel compelled to set the record straight. Population studies have confirmed the true risks of wearing contact lenses, and have confirmed what we have known for more than a decade. The risk of contracting an eye infection from a daily wear contact lens is 1 in 10,000. With extended wear, it is 1 in about 500. Of those, only 13 percent will lose a line or more of vision as a result. This makes contact lenses a factor of 1,000 times safer than LASIK. It is unfortunate, indeed, that some will need to resort to factual misrepresentation in order to "close the sale."

-- Greg Gemoules, O.D.

I went to an eye doctor for a free evaluation for the LASIK surgery. It was thorough, and the result was that I was not a good candidate and the doctor strongly recommended that I not have the surgery. I was crushed, needless to say, but at least I was told that it would not work for me.

In this situation, the doctor doing the evaluations was not the same doctor who would be performing the surgery. I think that probably helps in eliminating people who are not likely to get good results.

-- Mary Beth Reeves

Another alternative to LASIK is Intacs, which is a non-laser refractive surgery that was selected as one of the 10 best medical advances for 1999 by CNN/Health magazine. This is not the same as the intra-ocular lenses mentioned in the article, although the Intacs are also removable if the person does not want them or if one's vision changes when he gets older.

-- Thomas Lo

Many of the problems this industry is experiencing have to do with its rapid growth. It seems that everyone is jumping to get into this lucrative field. Since this surgery is not yet regulated by the government, it is the patient's responsibility to ask about the experience of the surgeon, number of surgeries performed and who will pay for any additional surgeries if necessary.

I went with an established and reputable company for my LASIK surgery in March '99, and the results have been phenomenal. I hate to sound unsympathetic to Kirk's plight, but as with most risky procedures, the rule is "caveat emptor."

-- Patricia Palagi

### **The art of the spiritual smackdown**

BY STEPHEN LEMONS

(03/07/00)

The interview with Deepak Chopra regarding his continuous legal battles exposes an odd but nevertheless deep-seated belief in our culture that to defend oneself against injustice is unspiritual. Spirituality is neither pacifism nor activism exclusively. It requires responding appropriately to the situation at hand. Given that there was no evidence the allegations against Chopra were true, why would one characterize his defense with the phrase "barracuda in the courtroom?" A barracuda is hardly an image of defense.

Today's courtroom is a poor tool to use to protect one's honor and integrity, but it is the only recourse available. It strikes me that settling out of court for a sum of money, if the allegations are untrue, is the truly unspiritual way out. Chopra should be congratulated for having the fortitude and self-respect to defend his own reputation. But more than that, he should be applauded as spiritual warrior against the cynical opportunists who depend on wealthy people to reward their accusations with financial settlements.