

NSIDE-Charles Campbell, MD  
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Dr. Charles Campbell is on a mission.

Sixty percent of his patients at South Texas Retina Consultants come to his office with varying levels of damage to their eyes at the hands of diabetes. Unfortunately, by the time most patients visit Campbell, the most severe damage has already been done and blindness is inevitable.

So his passion is not only to treat the eye diseases he sees most, like diabetic retinopathy, but prevent vision loss in diabetics.

“Avoiding vision loss when you are diabetic is a matter of maintaining a proper diet and managing your blood sugar levels,” Campbell says. “I’ve met so many diabetics who have resigned themselves that someday they would eventually lose their eyesight. This is just not the case.”

Campbell, a board-certified ophthalmologist specializing in vitreoretinal surgery, invests in the latest technology which gives him an edge in helping patients battle eye diseases, notes John Landers, administrator at the practice. People that would have needed to travel to Houston or San Antonio can now get the latest treatment in their own backyard, he explains.

“Dr. Campbell just invested \$150,000 in obtaining the latest technology in retinal photography, a Heidelberg Spectralis camera, which will capture detailed images of the back of the eye. I’m not aware of any other practice in our area offering this unique glimpse into the eye,” Landers notes.

Another component that sets his practice apart is his participation in clinical research. “Clinical trials allow our patients to participate in important research that’s usually only available in bigger cities,” says Campbell. “Now they too can contribute to future treatments for retinal diseases,” he adds.

Besides treating the effects of diabetes on the eyes, he also treats many other retinal disorders including Age Related Macular Degeneration. His care is extended to patients of all ages and even includes premature babies.

Campbell doesn’t just examine and treat, Landers explains. He’s passionate about discussing prevention with his patients, as well.

“Some of my patients going blind currently didn’t have to get to this point,” Campbell says with a mixture of conviction and frustration. “A diet of fruits and leafy green vegetables goes a long way in combating blindness in diabetics.”

Campbell established his first South Texas-based practice focused on treating diseases of the eye in 1974. Just a few short years later he opened another practice in the Rio Grande Valley.

Over the years, his charity work has included treating patients in rural South Texas counties. He has served as Medical Director for Project Orbis, providing free training to ophthalmologist in third world countries, as Medical Director of South Texas Eye Foundation, as president of the President’s Council for Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi and as President of the Nueces County Medical Society.

But in the end, Campbell goes back to the overall theme of treating eye diseases in South Texas.

“The true tragedy of eye disease is that so much of it is preventable,” laments Campbell. “I’m trying hard to show my patients how to eat, exercise and drink a lot of water. So many other factors are involved, as well, including incidences of obesity, heart disease and high blood pressure.”

It’s never too late for prevention and wellness, he stresses.

“You can start with the simple things: like if you smoke, quit. But don’t even start smoking, that’s even better.”

Campbell realized at an early age he wanted to become a doctor, thanks to an incident that almost cost him his life at just six years old.

“I had a horrible reaction to a tetanus shot that progressed quickly. On Friday I had the shot and by Sunday I was paralyzed,” Campbell recalls. “This was in 1948 so the first thing doctors thought of was polio and so I ended up in the Polio Ward of a San Antonio hospital for two days, until they realized the real cause of the paralysis.”

Eventually, doctors performed a spinal tap on Campbell and knew he didn’t have polio, although he remained paralyzed for two weeks.

“It’s an experience I never forgot and gave me the idea that someday I wanted to grow up and help heal patients as a physician, too.”

Ten years ago he developed a fellowship program that allows him to teach and train a new generation of retina specialists.

“Thanks to state-of-the-art equipment in the EYESI ophthalmosurgical simulator we’ve invested in recently, we are able to offer virtual reality simulated surgery so our fellows can learn in a hands-on environment,” Campbell said proudly.

Other advanced equipment housed in his 11,000 square-foot Corpus Christi office includes the Intrector which allows him to perform many procedures in office, as opposed to a hospital. “We do limited vitreoretinal procedures right here in the office,” he says. “But my ardent hope is to catch patients before they need invasive treatments like these. Prevention is the key to so many diseases ravaging South Texas currently.”

*South Texas Retina Consultants, LLC, is located at 5540 Saratoga, Suite 200, in Corpus Christi. They also have satellite offices throughout the Coastal Bend and Rio Grande Valley. For more information, visit [www.strc.cc](http://www.strc.cc) or call 361-993-8510.*