

**TLC Vision Corporation**

Are you planning to have laser eye surgery at [TLC](#)?

Are you impressed with TLC's [success stories](#)?

Do you believe that TLC will honor their "[Lifetime Commitment](#)" to you?

Do you have confidence in the integrity and surgical skill of TLC's founder, [Dr. Jeffery Machat](#)?

If you answered *yes* to any of these four questions, then please read about my experiences with eye surgery at TLC. Your decision to have eye surgery may result in permanently damaging results that are devastating to you. You may also discover that TLC will not back up their "Lifetime Commitment Program" if they damage your vision.

I am going to share my personal story with you so that you can get a more realistic view of what your experience *could* be like. This story is unpleasant for me to tell, but you deserve to know that TLC personnel are fully capable of damaging your vision, deceiving you, abandoning you as a patient, harassing you, and threatening you with lawsuits for speaking out. I know that TLC is capable of doing these things to you, because they did all of these things to me, with the full knowledge and approval of their CEO, Elias Vamvakas..



My name is Brent Hanson and I currently live near Chicago. I used to have vision that was correctable with contact lenses and glasses. After having refractive surgery at TLC, I had to get a cornea transplant in my left eye, which was paid for by United Healthcare. Glasses and contacts will no longer correct the vision in my right eye, and I have been waiting seven years for the development of new laser technology to repair damage.

When TLC Vision Centers (formerly Beacon Eye Institute), began running advertisements on a local television station in

**ISRS Adopts IRS Tactics**

**CRSQA / USAA Eyes**

**Evolving Technology**

**Surgical Devices**

**Throw Away Your Phone**

**More Dirty Secrets**

**For Investors Only****Feedback**

1996, I called Beacon and asked them to send me their promotional video. Their video painted a rosy picture of ecstatic patients talking about how wonderful it was to be free of having to wear contact lenses and glasses. The patients all reported having pain-free surgeries and good outcomes. I was impressed by their video and called their hotline to request that I be scheduled for surgery. A Beacon representative consulted with my optometrist, and then recommended that I have surgery performed by [Dr. Raymond Stein](#) at their [Toronto center](#).

Although I lived very close to a [Beacon center in Texas](#) where I lived at the time, I was told that the Toronto center was the best center for treating patients with astigmatism, such as myself. I later learned why TLC prefers to perform refractive surgery in Canada -- it is because Canada has a legal system that is much more protective of surgeons than the legal system in the U.S.

Dr. Stein performed PRK on both of my eyes in July 7, 1996. While the pain was extremely severe for about two days, the pain subsided on the third day, and I had excellent vision a week after the surgery. You can [click here](#) to see a picture of me right after I had my surgery. You can see that I was smiling in this photograph -- at the time I did not realize that Dr. Stein had used a technique for aiming the laser which would have negative long-term consequences. Specifically, Dr. Stein used the method recommended by the laser manufacturer (VISX), which was to aim the laser directly at the center of the pupil. I later learned that this method of aiming the laser is controversial, and that some surgeons believe that the laser should always be aimed at the "visual axis" instead of the center of the pupil.

Following my first surgery in 1996, the astigmatism gradually returned in both eyes, and I began having problems with my night vision. In January 1997, I traveled to Toronto to have "enhancement" surgery performed on both eyes by Dr. Stein. Like the first surgery, I once again had very good vision a week after the surgery. However, the astigmatism gradually regressed in my left eye to the point of being worse than it was prior to the second surgery. Also, I developed hyperopia and scarring in the left eye, which was not present prior to the surgery. In my right eye I noticed after several months that my night vision was gradually worsening which making it difficult to drive at night. I visited several eye surgeons in Texas, and they all seemed to be shocked by the level of scarring that had taken place.

In August 1997 I again traveled to Toronto for a third round of surgery to have Dr. Stein try to resolve the new problems with my vision. Dr. Stein performed three different surgical procedures in an attempt to correct the problems with my left eye. Dr. Stein declined to treat my right eye and stated that the problem with night vision was caused by the scarring, and that it would go away by itself. He never mentioned that I had a decentered ablation in my right eye. I asked Dr. Stein to transfer responsibility for my care to a [Beacon center in Texas](#), since I did not want to make any more costly trips to Toronto. Dr. Stein said that he could not consider asking another surgeon to take over my care, and declined my request.

In late 1997 I continued to make requests to Beacon to have responsibility for my care transferred to the [Arlington center in Texas](#). These requests were ignored until I attempted to contact the CEO of Beacon for assistance. I was then told that I would have to travel to Toronto for follow-up care, but that Beacon would pay for my travel expenses.



In May 1998 I received a letter from the new CEO of Beacon, [Elias Vamvakas](#) (pictured here), informing me that Beacon had been acquired by TLC in a merger, and that the patients of Beacon would receive the benefits of TLC's "Lifetime Commitment Program". You can [click here](#) to see the letter in Adobe Acrobat format, or [click here](#) to read the letter in HTML format.



In September 1998 I called the Toronto center and asked Heidi Wilson, who was the office manager to make arrangements for my trip to Toronto. Heidi said that she would "to get back with me on that". Heidi never followed up so I continued calling her

to ask for her assistance. Heidi finally told me that TLC would *not* pay for my trip to Toronto *because no one had ever put the promise in writing*. I then asked Heidi to transfer responsibility for my care to the Arlington center. Although she said she would take care of that request, she never follow up on that promise. Ironically, even though no one at TLC would help me at that time, TLC did send me a New Year's card (in September) which informed me that I needed to have a yearly examination by a TLC affiliated optometrist to remain eligible for the "Lifetime Commitment Program". You can see the New Years card by [clicking here](#).

In February 1999 I wrote a letter to the CEO of TLC requesting his assistance in obtaining care. I also visited a local Dallas surgeon who informed me that I was suffering from a "decentered ablation" in my right eye. In other words, Dr. Stein had incorrectly aimed the laser at my eye, which resulted in my night vision being impaired. In March 1999 I received a telephone call from Dr. Linda Foley, who was then the Executive Director of the [TLC center in Arlington](#). Dr. Foley said that TLC wanted to help me, and that she was referring my case to [Dr. Jeffery Machat](#), who is the National Medical Director for TLC in Canada. Dr. Foley also told me that TLC was capable of repairing decentered ablations. I later discovered that TLC did not have a method for repairing decentered ablations. I also received a telephone call from [Dr. David Eldridge](#) (pictured here) who is the VP for Clinical Affairs at TLC. Dr. Eldridge was apologetic for the past administrative problems that I had with TLC and said that the problems were due to a conflict between Dr. Stein and the management of the company. Dr. Eldridge also assured me (wrongly) that TLC would do its best to take care of me, but that there would be a delay because there were many patients with problems more severe than mine, who needed urgent treatment. I then received a letter from Dr. Jeffery Machat in which he blamed Dr. Stein for my problems, and in which he stated that *"we have been inundated with dozens and dozens of requests from patients who have requested us to take over their care due to the fact Dr.*



*Stein was either unwilling or unable to help them further". You can [click here](#) to read the letter in Adobe Acrobat format, or [click here](#) to read the letter in HTML format.*



In June 1999 I traveled to the [TLC center in Windsor, Canada](#) for surgery on both eyes to be performed by Dr. Machat (pictured here). I expected to have surgery with a surgeon in traditional surgical garb, but was surprised to see that Dr. Machat was instead wearing a business suit. Dr. Machat performed lasik surgery on my left eye without warning me that lasik is contra-indicated for patients who have undergone PRK surgery. Nor did he even performing a medical examination on my eyes. Dr. Machat said that he

could not fix the problem with my right eye, but did not clearly explain why he couldn't fix it. When I got back to Texas I called Dr. Eldridge's office to find out why TLC was unable to fix my right eye. I was told that there was a problem with TLC's topography guided laser technology, known as "Topolink". I was also told that it would take about a year for TLC to fix the problem with Topolink, and that TLC would help me when the problem was fixed.

I asked Dr. Foley to get a written statement from TLC guaranteeing that TLC would fix the decentered ablation in my right eye when Topolink became operational. Dr. Foley said she thought the request was reasonable, and presented the request to Dr. Eldridge. Dr. Eldridge denied the request, so I reworded the request to ask for a diagnoses and treatment plan for my right eye. Dr. Foley again attempted to get a written statement from Dr. Eldridge addressing the problem with my right eye. Apparently my request was then forwarded and miscommunicated to Dr. Machat. Incredible as it seems, Dr. Machat responded by writing me a letter in which he praised the quality of vision in my left eye; hinted that Dr. Stein was incompetent; and suggested that I return to Dr. Stein for re-

treatment of my left eye. You can read the original letter in Adobe Acrobat format by [clicking here](#), or the letter in HTML format by [clicking here](#). The same day that I received the letter from Dr. Machat, I also learned that Dr. Foley was leaving the TLC center in Arlington. This meant that she would no longer be able to help me.

I then sent a letter to Dr. Eldridge to inform him that I was not seeking a guarantee of treatment in my left eye, but that I wanted to know if TLC would keep its promise to repair the decentered ablation in my right eye. I received a call back from his assistant, indicating that Dr. Eldridge had received the letter and that I would be contacted by someone in the "Operations Department". I never did receive a response from the "Operations Department" so I continued to attempt to reach Dr. Eldridge, who dodged my telephone calls. Likewise, my telephone calls to the Arlington Center also were ignored. At this point the cold hard truth sunk in -- TLC decided that they were simply going to refuse to try to fix all the problems they had caused.

In June 2000 I sent a letter to TLC CEO Elias Vamvakas to notify him that I had put up a web site criticizing TLC. He called me on June 10 and claimed that the reason Dr. Eldridge never responded to my letter dated September 27, 1999, was that Dr. Eldridge had "*too many patient complaints*" to respond to *all of them*". Elias told me that TLC had 500-600 patients with untreatable complications and that the Clinical Affairs department was receiving 20-30 new cases per week. If Elias was telling the truth, then that meant that TLC had acquired 720 to 1,080 new patients with complications between September 27, 1999 and June 10, 2000.

Elias told me that both he and Dr. Machat thought that Dr. Stein was incompetent, and suggested that TLC would pay me to put up a site to criticize Dr. Stein exclusively. He also described Dr. Stein as being TLC's biggest competitor in the Toronto area. Elias said he would make arrangements to have one of the doctors at TLC help me, and that he would call me back. However, Elias changed his mind about helping me, and instead sent me an e-mail in which he threatened to sue me.

In July 2000, I was told that I required a cornea transplant in my

left eye by two non-TLC surgeons in Dallas. On August 16th, 2000, I had the [cornea transplant performed by a prominent surgeon in Dallas](#). TLC never offered to pay for the transplant.

In October, 2000, ICON Laser Eye Centers provided a free evaluation by eight of their surgeons to determine whether the decentered ablation in my right eye could be fixed. ICON decided not to attempt treatment of my right eye because I was still healing from the cornea transplant in the left eye, and they did not want to take any risks with the right eye, until it was certain that the left eye was fully healed. ICON later went out of business.

What is the condition of my vision now? I have fairly good daytime vision in my right eye, but have poor night vision. This cannot be corrected with glasses or contact lenses. The vision in my left eye is now correctable to about 20/30 with a contact lens. To read a surgeon's report on my vision prior to the cornea transplant, [click here](#) for the original report, or [click here](#) to read the report in HTML format. To see the topographical map of my eyes prior to the cornea transplant, [click here](#).

### **Do you find this story hard to believe?**

If you find this story hard to believe, please read my [affidavit](#) as a witness in a [lawsuit](#) that was filed against Elias Vamvakas, Dr. Jeffery Machat, and other TLC executives by, Lasik Vision Corporation. Lasik Vision Corporation was a competitor of TLC, who sued TLC executives for engaging in a conspiracy to drive Lasik Vision Corp. out of business through illegal means.