APPRIATIENESS OF CATARACT SURGERY

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Cataracts are prevalent among older adults, and the incidence of cataract-related vision loss increases with age.¹ When performed appropriately, cataract extraction usually improves quality of life, reduces injury, and attenuates functional declines. Cataract extraction has proven to be generally safe and highly successful; however, it is important to ensure that surgery is performed for the appropriate indications because vision-threatening complications can occur.

I. GUIDELINES

The American Academy of Ophthalmology Preferred Practice Pattern for Cataract in the Adult Eye offers general parameters for ethical decision-making in cataract surgery:

The primary indication for surgery is visual function that no longer meets the patientʼs needs and for which cataract surgery provides a reasonable likelihood of improvement, or when the lens opacity inhibits optimal management of posterior segment disease or the lens causes (inflammation, angle closure, etc) medically unmanageable open-angle glaucoma.²

II. ACADEMIC STUDIES OF APPROPRIATENESS

In 1996, an expert panel of both ophthalmologists and nonophthalmologists first applied well-established standardized criteria for evaluating the appropriateness of medical interventions to assess 1139 cataract surgeries performed in 10 US academic centers during 1990.³ Based on expert review of available medical records, researchers deemed the overwhelming majority