

Take 5 with a US SMILE Surgeon

A conversation with Sonny Goel, MD



Seeing beyond



Dr. Sonny Goel first performed SMILE when he founded Goel Vision. In the last 14 months, despite the pandemic and being closed for two months, he has performed 900 SMILE® procedures.

We sat down with Dr. Goel to learn more about why he has adopted SMILE from ZEISS.

Q How did you first get involved with the SMILE procedure and why?

A I was at the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) meeting in San Francisco in October 2019 as a member of the AAO Board of Trustees and was meeting with some of my Chinese colleagues. When they learned that as a refractive surgeon I had not done any SMILE procedures, they ‘very’ vehemently encouraged me to explore SMILE because they were so happy with the results and the technology. I had also heard great things about the technology and technique. So, I started performing SMILE in January of 2020.

Q How has SMILE been received by your patients and what has been your experience introducing this as a new procedure within your market?

A It’s been amazing. Most patients who come in know that I have been doing LASIK for 20 years with 95,000+ procedures under my belt. They come in looking for LASIK, and I educate them about the advantages of SMILE over LASIK. I tell them that the results are, generally, the same for all of the procedures, that it is a matter of which approach is best for their specific situation.

Q What are the top three pearls you would share with a colleague who’s considering adding SMILE as a treatment option?

A First, even though SMILE does not correct all treatment ranges, for instance it is not approved to treat hyperopic refractions, it does correct the majority of patients—we’re doing 85 percent SMILE in my clinic. Second, SMILE offers an equivalent vision outcome to LASIK with excellent clinical results. And third, the cornea is more stable. The very next day, patients can go back to their normal activities. They can swim, work out, or put on eye makeup. There are no restrictions because nothing is going to move. I’m seeing fewer dry eye issues as well. With LASIK when you cut a large corneal flap, you’re cutting the corneal nerves. Some patients notice a little more dryness of their eyes initially and remember, I still do a fair amount of LASIK procedures, but I’m not seeing the dry eye syndrome with my SMILE patients. And with SMILE, I tell patients that when the procedure is complete and they sit up from the laser bed, they will see 50 percent better right away. The next morning, 90 percent of the smoky haze is gone. We put patients on a topical antibiotic

and topical steroid eye drops for seven days to facilitate the healing process. With LASIK, you’ve got to be careful. You can’t touch or rub your eyes for a week. You can’t wear makeup for a week. You worry about the flap moving or shifting if you rub your eyes. I don’t have that concern with SMILE. I tell my patients that after their SMILE procedure they won’t even need to sleep in goggles like I require of my LASIK patients.

Q LASIK is a great procedure successfully performed in millions of cases to free patients from reliance on glasses and contact lenses. Given LASIK’s success, why do you think SMILE has been so well received on a global scale?

A It’s an amazing technique and technology. When I talk to patients about the differences between PRK, LASIK, and SMILE—I do all three, so I’m not denigrating any procedure—the patients will uniformly ask me why would anyone choose LASIK or PRK if they qualify for SMILE. And every time I tell the patient they qualify for SMILE, they go with SMILE for all the reasons we’ve discussed.

Q Within the US market, what do you feel are some of the main misconceptions regarding SMILE or hesitations surgeons have that keep them from adopting SMILE?

A I’ve heard the misconception about slower vision recovery. It’s not true. Every year, the technology has been updated and improved, similar to our smartphones. The VisuMax® femtosecond laser from ZEISS now uses lower energy levels, which I’ve noticed to result in lower post-op inflammation and therefore faster recovery.

SMILE is the next iteration of the advancement of laser vision correction. And I think our patients demand us to be improving the technology for better outcomes, better safety. Those are the reasons I invest in new technology.

About Dr. Sonny Goel

Dr. Goel, the founder of Goel Vision, is a board-certified ophthalmologist and one of the most experienced laser eye surgeons in the country. He has been performing laser vision correction surgery since 1997 and has performed over 95,000 LASIK procedures and more than 900 SMILE procedures. Dr. Goel is skilled in a wide range of ophthalmic procedures including SMILE, LASIK, PRK, cataract surgery, intraocular lenses and ICL.

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