Revista Médica del
Hospital General de México

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HISTORY ARTICLE

Ophthalmology: the search for visual health

Emma V. Ramírez-Sánchez, Karla P. García-Carmona, and Ma. Estela Arroyo-Yllanes*

Ophthalmology Service, Hospital General de México Dr. Eduardo Liceaga, Seccretaría de Salud, Mexico City, Mexico

Introduction

Thinking about the history of the *Hospital General de México Dr. Eduardo Liceaga* (HGM) throughout these first 120 years, fills us with pride and satisfaction to be part of this history. Since its inception, the Ophthalmology Service has been represented by outstanding ophthalmologists who made important contributions to the world of ophthalmology both nationally and internationally; hence, it has evolved both in the knowledge of eye diseases, in clinical diagnosis and that carried out by diagnostic assistants, as well as the medical and surgical treatments which have been developed in this noble institution.

In such a changing world, which the HGM has witnessed from its beginnings in 1905 to the present, scientific and technological advances in the different areas of medicine, ophthalmology has not been the exception. The evolution of cataract surgery that began with the intracapsular technique to the present day with cataract phacoemulsification procedures or cataract surgery with femtosecond laser, the different refractive surgery techniques that we have available today. Treatments for cases of diabetic retinopathy, such as laser, vitrectomy surgery, and in some cases, treatment with antiangiogenic drugs and dexamethasone implants for the treatment of associated macular edema, have become very relevant in recent years. In diagnostic aids, ultrasound, interferometers, Scheimpflug cameras, and optical coherence tomographs have also undergone an evolution that in recent years has been at great speed, providing more accurate results and images that provide great information for the diagnosis and monitoring of eye diseases.

Visual health for those of us who make up the ophthalmology service is a passion and an ongoing challenge to care for, restore, or preserve our patients' vision. The change in life expectancy, maternal and child health, the diagnosis and control of chronic-degenerative diseases, and the timely detection of oncological diseases, among others, are factors that have given a different expression to eye diseases. Hence, the need for continuous updating and daily learning arises.

Head of the Ophthalmology Service 2010-2017

When Dr. María Estela Arroyo Yllanes took over the management, many challenges were encountered that had to be focused on and measures taken to carry out the various projects. One of the important problems was the occupation of the beds of the service by patients from other services, which caused frequent suspension of surgical procedures, so it was decided to start the ambulatory surgery program in August 2010. For the outpatient surgery program, 8 non-census beds, 6 adult beds, and 2 cribs were used. In this first period, 365 surgeries were performed. In 2016, 1139 were performed, which represented 38% of the Service's surgeries.

Another challenge to be solved was the clinical file, so it was decided to restructure it, the first step was the

***Correspondence:**
Emma V. Ramírez-Sánchez
E-mail: verooso@hotmail.com

Date of reception: 15-01-2026
Date of acceptance: 20-02-2026
DOI: 10.24875/HGMX.M26000068

Available online: 24-04-2026
Rev Med Hosp Gen Mex. 2026;89(Supl 1):23-26
www.hospitalgeneral.mx

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printing of folders of different colors per year, which allowed to keep both the ophthalmological file, the administrative file and all the studies in one place, An important decision was the change in the way of the purification of the clinical records, manually one by one, discarding the dead file only those with more than 5 years of absence and updating the others to a new number; This task was carried out by medical personnel in order to be able to properly evaluate the cases that should be updated.

In the administrative area, a job profile was made per person, emphasizing how to cover activities during vacation or disability periods. The operating room was remodeled to comply with the standard, including the exterior corridor for the correct flow in and out, as well as the recovery area. Two clinics were formed: Diabetic Retinopathy Patient Care Clinic and Retinopathy of Prematurity Patient Care Clinic, both important visual health problems. In one of the areas in which special emphasis was placed was on teaching, 2 fixed vacation periods were assigned for residents in June and December. This implementation allowed for more efficient planning of the academic program, clinical sessions, and examinations without extemporaneousness.

It was possible to enter the specialization course in ophthalmology to the High-Quality program of *Consejo Nacional de Humanidades, Ciencias y Tecnologías* (CONACYT), with this program, the residents were able, among other things, to opt for a 4-week rotation abroad financed by CONACYT. The endorsement of the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* was achieved for the high specialty courses in retina, directed by Dr. Daniel Moreno Páramo, and glaucoma by Dr. Sergio Herrero Herrera, with this the service had 5 high specialty courses: strabismus, cornea, anterior segment surgery, retina, and vitreous and glaucoma. During the administration, all the graduates who took the certification exam of the Mexican Council of Ophthalmology were approved, and most of them took a high specialty course.

The Ophthalmology Service was named after Dr. Magin Puig Solanes, who began specialty courses in Mexico, with university recognition, with the Specialization Course in ophthalmology taught in the Ophthalmology Service of the HGM being the first in the country. There were many achievements and many others that were not carried out or were left at the beginning or unfinished, representing the ophthalmologists of the HGM. It was a great honor, and what was done was largely due to the collaboration, help, and willingness of each of them.

Head of the Ophthalmology Service 2017-2023

During the management, as head of the Ophthalmology Service of the HGM, of Dr. Karla Paola García Carmona, which lasted from March 2017 to August 2023, strategies were implemented to improve the quality and productivity of surgical activity. This made it possible to achieve a 37% increase in the main cause of ophthalmological surgery, cataract phacoemulsification, benefiting one of the main needs of the country's most vulnerable population. Another achievement was obtaining the certification of the Ophthalmology Service for *Seguro Popular* in 2018, later *Instituto de Salud para el Bienestar*, to operate on senile cataract, congenital cataract, corneal transplant, pterygium, glaucoma, strabismus, and retinopathy of prematurity. It is important to note that, throughout the global contingency due to COVID-19, the ophthalmology service remained open, attending to medical and surgical emergencies, resulting in being the only option at that time for the care of these, since the Ophthalmological Institutes and other services remained closed in the first wave of infections. In terms of research, 8 articles and 2 books were published, written, and developed by the basic physicians of the service.

Ophthalmology was the service of the HGM that performed short-stay procedures, with 5,733 interventions under this concept, which represented 40% of the total surgical interventions performed in this period, which made it the greatest reference in experience for its administration and management, a process that has eventually been replicated by the other services of the hospital.

During November 2021, the opinion of reaccreditation for Medical Care was obtained, for 5 more years, in the Universal Catalog of Health Services as an Establishment for Ophthalmological Care, in which this service participates with the main intervention indicated in it, Cataract Surgery, highlighting that, during this period, a total of 7,547 interventions were performed. The project for the acquisition of ophthalmological equipment was presented: visual field, manual tonometer, YAG laser, specular microscope for patients, and specular microscope for the eye bank. In terms of transplants, 164 corneal transplants were performed, thanks to the fact that in 2018 and 2023 the service achieved the accreditation opinion on capacity, quality, and safety for medical care for transplants in pediatric and/or adult patients in corneal transplantation (Table 1).

In teaching, the Specialty in Ophthalmology Program was maintained in the National Quality Graduate Program of CONACYT, despite the contingency period due to COVID-19, and an average graduation rate of 78% was achieved in this period.

Head of the Ophthalmology Service 2023 to date

At present, the service is in charge of Dr. Emma Verónica Ramírez Sánchez from August 15, 2023 to date; this service is made up of 25 affiliated doctors, 10 doctors in high specialty courses (4 retina, 3 anterior segment, 2 glaucoma and 1 strabismus); 22 resident doctors (eight 1st year, seven 2nd year and seven 3rd year), 3 social service interns, 3 CENATRA (*Centro Nacional de Trasplantes*) social service interns and 10 optometry interns. We also have 2 optometrists, 34 nurses, 16 administrative staff, 11 caregivers, 2 stretcher-bearers, and 2 social work graduates. Each and every one of us contributes to the assigned tasks, with a sense of responsibility and working as a team to provide care for the patients who are our main engine.

From January to October 2024, 6799 first-time patients have been treated, and 19747 subsequent consultations have been granted. Likewise, 2061 surgeries have been performed, in addition to different diagnostic and therapeutic procedures that, in total add up to 5835 procedures (Table 2).

In June of this year, after a project of several years with Patrimony of Public Charity, the arrival of different equipment was achieved, including: campimeter, yag laser, and specular microscopes, as well as a non-contact tonometer. In July 2024, recognition was received from Rotary Mexico City for the professional and committed work of the members of this service, and in November 2024, recognition from the Mexican Council of Ophthalmology for the outstanding participation as the venue for the certification examination.

Work is being done to consolidate the eye bank, as well as to strengthen the corneal transplant program within this Unit. Likewise, comprehensive patient management has continued, with joint work between general ophthalmology doctors and highly specialized ophthalmology doctors in order to establish optimal diagnoses and treatments according to each case. In collaboration with the pharmaceutical industry, a campaign is being carried out to diagnose macular diseases with a mobile unit equipped with an optical coherence tomograph from October to December of this year. And it could possibly continue through 2025.

Table 1. Number of transplants and number of corneal procurements per year

Year	Transplant	Procurement
2008	17	29
2009	30	33
2010	42	62
2011	38	46
2012	44	44
2013	54	60
2014	44	45
2015	27	32
2016	38	39
2017	43	66
2018	37	58
2019	24	30
2020	4	4
2021	10	20
2022	25	35
2023	34	43
2024	19	30

Table 2. Main diagnoses and surgical procedures

Diagnostics	Procedures surgical
Cataract	Cataract phacoemulsification with intraocular lens implant
Diabetic retinopathy	Posterior vitrectomy
Glaucoma	Glaucoma surgery
Strabismus	Corneal transplantation
Uveitis	Surgery of the orbit, eyelids, or tear duct
Corneal diseases	Strabismus surgery

Likewise, since the end of 2023, the process for the accreditation of the *Modelo Único de Evaluación de la Calidad* (MUEC) began, and in conjunction with the hospital authorities, work is being carried out for the surgical tower B project, where this service will be incorporated in the coming years. Steps were taken to restructure the hospitalization beds, as well as the short-stay, in order to optimize the operation of the operating room and hospitalization, to meet the demand of the different ophthalmological surgical procedures.

On the part of the doctors of the service, they have participated in different presentations, in book chapters, as well as in the publication of scientific articles. In teaching, the program of the Specialty in Ophthalmology is continued within the National Program of Quality Graduate Studies of CONACYT.

In the future, the ophthalmology service will continue to work for and for the visual health of the patients of this institution, seeking to provide more equipment, continue the hard work of programs such as transplantation and cataract surgery; care of pediatric patients with eye diseases, corneal diseases, retinal and vitreous diseases, glaucoma, strabismus, inflammatory eye diseases, eyelid and orbital problems, neuro-ophthalmological conditions, among others; developing the different surgical techniques as well as their innovation.

Strengthen the teaching of the specialty course, as well as that of the different High Specialty courses that we have based on academic excellence, ethical and humanistic principles, together with the development of research in each of the areas. To do this, to continue contributing to the greatness that, during these 120 years, the HGM has achieved, and the Ophthalmology Service will continue the search for visual health.

Conclusion

Since its inception, the Ophthalmology Service has contributed to the care of patients with eye diseases. Over the years, it has overcome various challenges but has worked and will continue to work for the benefit of patients and in pursuit of visual health.

Funding

The authors declare that they have not received funding.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethical considerations

Protection of human subjects and animals. The authors declare that the procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation and with the World Medical Association and the Declaration of Helsinki. The procedures were authorized by the Institutional Ethics Committee.

Confidentiality, informed consent, and ethical approval. This study does not involve personal patient data, medical records, or biological samples, and does not require ethical approval. SAGER guidelines do not apply.

Declaration on the use of artificial intelligence. The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence was used in the writing or creation of the content of this manuscript.