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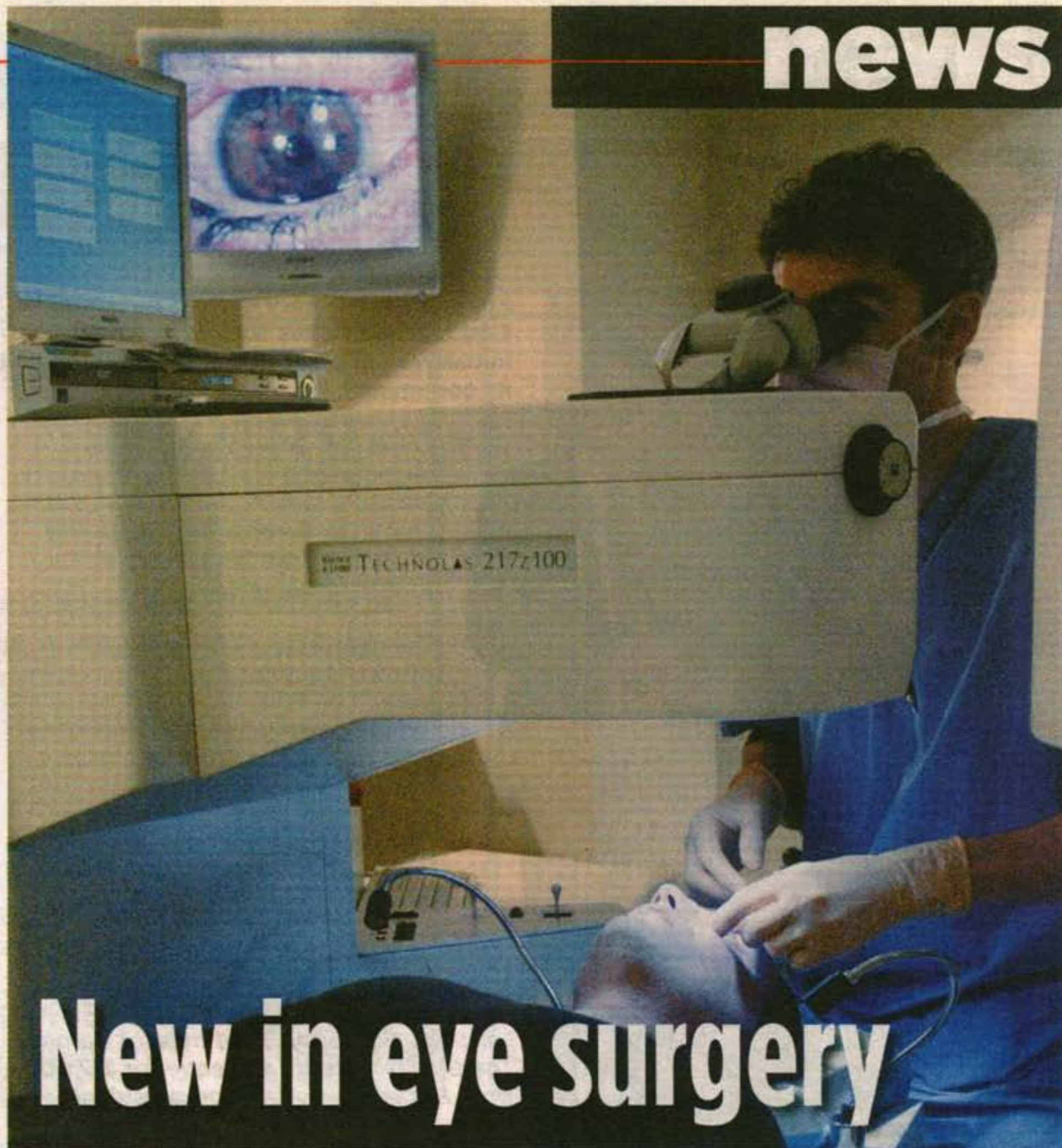


Howard Smith.

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New in eye surgery

New Zealander's suffering from vision impairments no longer need to go 'under the knife' for treatment.

The Eye Institute in Remuera is using a new technique to correct short and long sightedness and oval corneal curvature. It uses laser surgery to make incisions on the eyelid, instead of metal blades.

The IntraLase technique uses a machine valued at \$700,000 to perform a procedure called LASIK. Previously the procedure required surgeons to cut a thin corneal flap, lift and treat underneath the flap with a laser. Now surgeons can use a laser to make the initial incision resulting in the treatment being less invasive and painful for patients.

Dr Adam Watson, from the Eye Institute, has performed more than 400 operations using IntraLase and said it is an exciting development for eye surgery in New Zealand. "The advantage for patients is that they no longer have to face being cut

with a blade," Dr Watson explained.

"From a doctor's point of view the technique is more precise and safer than using a blade. It becomes easier for the patients too, because they don't have to have their eyelids slit and the whole procedure becomes more comfortable. It's very exciting to be able to offer this technique in New Zealand and there is a possibility it can be used for other applications as well."

Recovery time for patients has remained the same, with vision corrected as early as the following day.

More than 99 per cent of patients will have better than the level of vision required for driving after the procedure, says Dr Watson. "Over 600,000 procedures have been performed worldwide using the new technology with no reports of serious sight threatening complications."

By Candice Reed