

TEAM SYNERGY

"I loaded her visual field test results onto the monitor that she could see from her exam chair and tried to find the best words to explain her condition—after we had already intervened. At this point, I knew that a direct delivery of facts with empathy was the best path forward. I patiently reviewed her exam findings and test results with her and paused intermittently to assess if she was grasping the critical nature of her disease. I could sense the mood in the room shift as she recognized that total blindness had been a very real possibility without immediate surgery. She began to cry."

—Finny T. John, MD



As physicians, we all have encounters like the one Finny T. John, MD, describes in this issue of GT (pg 57). And, regardless of how long our careers or excellent our outcomes, we all can get knocked off balance by their impact.

Glaucoma is a complex problem with complex solutions. Our patients will endure continual visits and examinations, they have been or will be subjected to multiple interventions, and they will (hopefully) at some point face the hard realization of what is at stake.

Glaucoma is a complex problem with complex solutions, but does it always need to be? When it comes to the patient in the chair before us, could we be making their situation more complicated than it already is? A deep immersion in our expertise is a requirement, but we may be doing a disservice to our patients if we are unable to surface and reach common ground.

Synergy between patients and physicians is a critical element of care. A strategy for establishing it is to treat each patient's experience as if it is personal—one day, it could be. Being glaucoma physicians does not preclude us from being glaucoma patients. The insight that Finny acquired in fellowship is the training that we all need—and will all likely get one way or another—with glaucoma.

As evidenced by the articles in this issue's cover focus, regardless of the technical difficulty a case presents, at the heart of it is a human being facing a very tough opponent. No matter how strongly we commit to making a *great save* for each patient, the real priority is being on the same synergistic team. ■

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read "Finny T. John".

ASSOCIATE MEDICAL EDITOR