

Patient Testimonial  
Sandra Hickey  
Storm Eye Institute

At 26 years of age Sandra Hickey knew something was wrong. Her eyes began to change and her facial appearance started looking different. An appointment with a physician at the Medical University of South Carolina confirmed her suspicions. Ms Hickey was diagnosed with Grave's Disease.

As a thyroid condition, Grave's Disease causes the thyroid to become overactive, secreting an enzyme called prostaglandin, causing the muscles in the eyes to relax and the eyes to bulge in the eye socket. For Sandra Hickey, the signature look of bulging eyes was something she feared she'd have to live with for the rest of her life. Until her physician recognized her dismay at dealing with her physical changes and the irritation it caused her eyes on a daily basis and recommended she schedule an appointment with oculoplastic surgeon Gene Howard, MD, at Storm Eye Institute.

Trained as an oculoplastic surgeon, Dr Howard specializes in conditions affecting the delicate area surrounding the eyes. For Grave's Disease patients Dr Howard is able to perform a series of operations to tighten the muscles around the eyes and restore a more normal appearance. For Sandra Hickey, it was a miracle. "God didn't put me in Dr Howard's office for failure. I remember thinking 'there is hope here'." With a successful first surgery completed only one week later, that hope turned in to reality. "It is not an easy road. It took twenty-four years for me to realize something could be done. It took another year for the healing process to complete after the first surgery and my full appearance to be restored. But, ultimately, it is about quality of life."

Because most patients don't realize surgical options are available or that most procedures are covered under insurance, they wait years to seek medical help for their physical symptoms. "I had been dealing with this for so long my kids had never seen me without the bulging eyes", says Hickey. "This has added so much to my life. Dr Howard is a phenomenal person – he has given me an incredible gift." Sandra Hickey has committed herself to educating other Grave's Disease patients about the benefits of surgery and the options now available to them. "I know what they're going through. I want them to realize it doesn't have to be that way."

For more information about Storm Eye Institute or to schedule an appointment with Gene Howard, MD, call (843) 792-8100 or visit us online at [www.stormeye.org](http://www.stormeye.org)