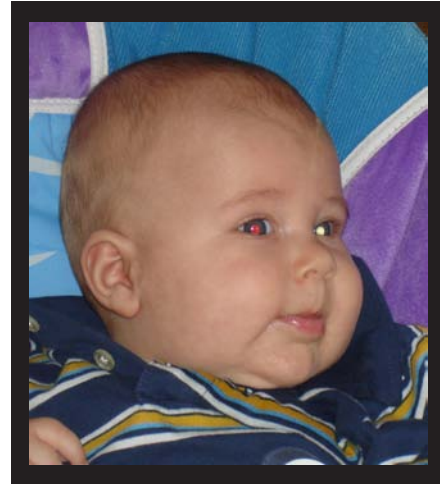


“those photographs might very well have saved his life”



Maria Pezzente writes:

“A photograph helped diagnose our son, Leo, with an eye cancer. We first noticed a strange hue over his eye when reviewing photographs we had just taken with our digital camera. We immediately developed the photographs.

Leo was assessed by several ophthalmologists at Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto and his eye was enucleated within days.

In short, those photographs might very well have saved his life.

Retinoblastoma is a childhood eye cancer typically affecting infants and children up to 5 years of age. It accounts for approximately 3% of pediatric cancers and affects 1 in 15,000 live births. It can be inherited or sporadic as in Leo’s case. It is one of the most malignant forms of cancer spreading quickly to brain through the optic nerve if left untreated. Parental awareness is essential as this condition often goes undiagnosed by pediatricians until it is at a more advanced stage.

Astonishingly, parents are most often the first to notice signs. The flash of the camera can make the tumor(s) visible in photographs, appearing as a white hue, rather than seeing red eye reflex as in a normal healthy eye.

We are hoping you would consider launching an awareness campaign as you have the unique ability to reach parents.

We hope that something positive can come from Leo’s diagnosis and would most sincerely appreciate any awareness you would be willing to create.”

Dr Brenda L. Gallie writes:

“Almost every new diagnosis of retinoblastoma is achieved in the first instance by the parent noticing the white pupil in the photographs of the baby. Often they have not questioned the appearance for some time, or until some other signs occurs.

If they were aware of retinoblastoma, and if they had seen such a picture and knew of the importance, many of these children would be diagnosed earlier, with better prospect for simpler treatment, better vision, more eyes saved, and much less risk to life.”

Dr Brenda L. Gallie is an Ophthalmologist at Sick Children’s Hospital, Toronto.

<http://www.uhnresearch.ca/labs/gallie/core/home.shtml>

Here’s what you can do.

Take a monthly photograph of your children under the age of 5, in a dimly lit room with the red eye reduction feature turned off (use the regular auto flash setting only). If you see a white circle in the child’s pupil (as in the picture of Leo), print a copy of the photograph and consult your pediatrician.