

Fetal-tissue transplant rescues woman's sight

Louisvillian part of a clinical trial

By Laura Ungar

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Elizabeth Bryant of Louisville was legally blind and could see only outlines of nearby objects when Dr. Norman D. Radtke transplanted fetal tissue into her left eye as part of a clinical trial.

More than two years later, she said, she can see well enough to read large print and sew.

Bryant, 65, has retinitis pigmentosa, a group of inherited diseases in which there is progressive degeneration of the retina that can cause blindness. She said she participated in the research to help herself and other sufferers — including her daughter.

"Anything was worth a try. I was losing my eyesight," she said. "I felt like I had nothing to lose and a lot to gain."

This week, the British magazine *New Scientist* published an article on Bryant and the transplant, saying her improvement has been "a remarkable transformation."

Radtke, an eye surgeon and owner of Retina Vitreous Resource Center in Louisville, said Bryant's



Photos by Pat McDonough, The Courier-Journal

Elizabeth Bryant of Louisville can now see well enough to perform many tasks, including painting ceramics.

See FETAL, A4, col. 5

The operation

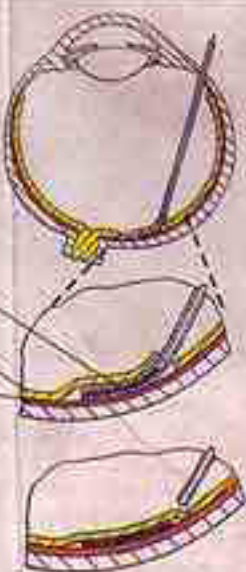
Surgeon uses an instrument, carrying the transplant tissue, to insert the tissue between the patient's retina and retinal pigment epithelium.

Transplant tissue in nozzle

Retina

Retinal pigment epithelium

The transplant tissue is pushed out of the instrument between the two layers in the patient's eye and the instrument is withdrawn.



Dr. Norman D. Radtke transplanted fetal tissue into Bryant's left eye as part of a clinical trial.