The procedure was done using topical anesthesia, with Couto lying down on the operating table. Dorwal made a 2.8mm incision into each cornea and, using an injector, implanted folded artificial iris tissue made of medical-grade silicone. "The entire process took 30 minutes, about 15 minutes per eye," says Couto. An hour later, she was back at the Eros Hotel New Delhi ordering a Caesar salad from room service. The only restrictions were to avoid getting water in her eyes and to administer a series of drops until the incision healed properly over the next three to four weeks.

Four days after the surgery, Couto is back in London, eager to see her new color. "And my grandmother made a comment about how my eyes are so much more beautiful than hers!" says Couto. "It completely changed my face. I can't believe that what I had wanted for so long has happened," she says. "It's almost like I know myself in the mirror now. I can't stop looking in the mirror!" She blushes a little, allowing how excited she actually is.

After the surgery, Couto experimented with colored contacts, but had found the colors chosen by patients include ice gray and Couto’s choice of olive green. While the BrightOcular implants are a U.S. design, the FDA only approved in 2015, and is equally happy with the results. "I'd needed vision correction for most of my life, so I'd grown accustomed to being photographed in close-up shots during concerts or TV appearances," she says. "After I had laser corrective surgery, I didn’t need contacts anymore, and I was back to my natural hand-eye. BrightOcular gave me the opportunity to have the color I’d grown used to, without ever having to wear contacts again."

But not all stories of artificial iris implants have happy endings. Research shows that these types of surgeries have not always had the best track record. In 2013, Toronto-based ophthalmologist Dr. Allan Slomovic treated a 23-year-old patient who underwent an iris implantation procedure in Panama that had left her severely visually impaired. “I saw her after she had bilateral advanced Glaucoma from the surgery and required several cornea transplants,” he explains. "She was an artist who ultimately had to abandon her profession because of this cosmetic surgery. She’s in misery!"

And a 2011 study by the American Journal of Ophthalmology advises that anterior chamber iris implants should not be used for cosmetic indications. Dorwal, Couto’s surgeon, agrees that there are eye enhancement procedures happening around the world he would advise against. For instance, some doctors use a laser to burn the melanin out of the eye as a means of lightening the iris. “That can lead to an increase in eye pressure and glaucoma,” Dorwal explains. “And that type of procedure is not reversible.”

But after personally performing 157 BrightOcular procedures over the last two years, he maintains that these implants are a harmless and effective way to alter the color of one’s eyes. “I have not encountered a patient who has had any kind of reaction to the implant,” he says. “We are introducing something into the eye, we are not manipulating its physiology or the anatomy. So this is a very safe and reversible process.”

For Couto, at least, the benefits far outweighed the risks. Two weeks after her surgery, she says she couldn’t imagine her life without green eyes. The entrepreneur—who is in the process of writing a self-help book titled “Looking in the Mirror.”—is thrilled she can now express herself more naturally.

“I can't believe what I had wanted for so long has happened. I can't stop looking in the mirror.”

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**LIFE**

**Will Travel for Baby Blues**

An obscure cosmetic surgery has patients trekking halfway around the world to change their eye color.

**BY NICOLE PAJER**

"I can't believe what I had wanted for so long has happened. I can't stop looking in the mirror."