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Clinical outcomes of modern lamellar keratoplasty techniques

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Korine van Dijk

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Cover: Representation of a patient's view of part of the painting (by J. de Graaf with permission) in my consultation room, before and after Descemet membrane endothelial keratoplasty

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Clinical outcomes of modern lamellar keratoplasty techniques

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CONTENTS

Preface		7
Chapter 1	General introduction and outline	9
Part I - Selective, minimal invasive treatment of endothelial disorders		
Chapter 2	Near complete visual recovery and refractive stability in modern corneal transplantation: Descemet membrane endothelial keratoplasty (DMEK). <i>Cont Lens Anterior Eye 2013;36:13-21</i>	47
Chapter 3	Incidence of irregular astigmatism eligible for contact lens fitting after Descemet membrane endothelial keratoplasty. <i>J Cataract Refr Surg 2013;39:1036-1046</i>	67
Chapter 4	Optical quality of the cornea after Descemet membrane endothelial keratoplasty. <i>Am J Ophthalmol 2014;158:71-79</i>	85
Chapter 5	Two-Year Refractive Outcomes After Descemet Membrane Endothelial Keratoplasty. <i>Cornea 2016;35:1548-1555</i>	101
Part II - New treatment option for advanced keratoconus		
Chapter 6	Midstromal isolated Bowman layer graft for reduction of advanced keratoconus: a technique to postpone penetrating or deep anterior lamellar keratoplasty. <i>JAMA Ophthalmol. 2014;132:495-501</i>	121
Chapter 7	Bowman layer transplantation to reduce and stabilize advanced progressive keratoconus. <i>Ophthalmology 2015;122:909-917</i>	135
Chapter 8	Bowman layer transplantation: 5-year results. <i>Submitted for publication</i>	157
Chapter 9	Summary	173
Chapter 10	Nederlandse samenvatting (Dutch summary)	189
Appendices	List of publications	205
	Dankwoord (Acknowledgement)	211
	Curriculum Vitae	213

PREFACE

Corneal transplantation (or keratoplasty) is one of the most successful and widely performed methods of tissue transplantation. Its major goal is to restore or improve vision, but globe preservation, pain reduction and improving the cosmetic appearance of the eye are also important motives. Leading indications for corneal transplantation are Fuchs endothelial dystrophy, bullous keratopathy, failed corneal grafts, keratoconus and corneal scars.

Since the first successful corneal transplantation in 1905, numerous ophthalmologists have contributed to further refinement, assisted by the development of surgical microscopes, the introduction of general anesthesia and corticosteroids, improved suture materials, and the founding of eye banks. Recently, the selective replacement of only the diseased corneal layers, rather than replacing all corneal layers (such as in penetrating corneal transplantation), has dramatically transformed corneal transplantation surgery. At present, endothelial keratoplasty (EK) has become the treatment of choice for corneal endothelial disease, and anterior lamellar keratoplasty is increasingly advocated for corneal stromal disease.

The latest innovation in the field of EK is Descemet membrane endothelial keratoplasty (DMEK). With this technique, only the Descemet membrane and endothelium are replaced, resulting in a restoration that approaches the original corneal anatomy. Alongside the trend towards more selective and minimally invasive transplantation techniques in endothelial keratoplasty, recently, also new treatment options have emerged for patients with (advanced) keratoconus, including the mid-stromal implantation of an isolated donor Bowman layer, referred to as Bowman layer transplantation.

This thesis will focus on the feasibility and clinical outcomes of DMEK for managing endothelial disorders, and the use of Bowman layer grafts, i.e. Bowman layer transplantation, in the management of advanced keratoconus.

