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By Jo Macfarlane

T WAS the news that raised hope for millions of Britons facing age-related blindness. June Brown, the actress who plays Dot Cotton in EastEnders, had been saved from blindness by what was described as a ‘miracle’ eye implant operation. Having struggled to even recognise the faces of her own children, she was once again able to read and praised the ‘astonishing’ results.

But an investigation by this newspaper revealed that scores of patients, some in their 70s and 80s, alleged they were left with little or no difference to their eyesight after paying up to £25,000 for the heavily advertised procedure at the London Eye Hospital in Harley Street. Now Bobby Qureshi, the surgeon who developed the procedure, faces being struck off by the General Medical Council following an 18-month investigation. The consultant ophthalmologist has been summoned to appear before a disciplinary panel in Manchester facing allegations of dishonesty and misconduct.

Publicly available documents reveal many of the allegations have been made against the clinical conduct of Mr Qureshi in relation to 24 patients treated at the Harley Street clinic. The surgeon will face further accusations over a claim published about his procedure for age-related macular degeneration (AMD) in paid-for national newspaper advertisements, which was ‘unsubstantiated and that he knew was unsubstantiated’, according to the documents.

The allegations will be disclosed in full on the day of the tribunal, which is set to begin on January 14.

The hearing is expected to run until the end of March and the case has been described by a GMC official as ‘unusually complex’, partly because of the high number of patients involved. The panel will decide whether Mr Qureshi is fit to continue practicing as a doctor in Britain. While the allegations could yet be dismissed, the panel could choose to give him a warning, suspend him from the register or even strike him off.

None of the patients involved in the case has yet been named, but it is understood that many involved have previously reported their concerns to this newspaper.

A dossier of evidence involving a significant number of patients was handed to the GMC by the charity The Macular Society in June 2017.

An interim hearing the following month placed restrictions on Mr Qureshi’s practice while a probe was launched. Caryl Chater, chief executive of The Macular Society, said last night: ‘We have previously raised concerns with the GMC and are pleased an investigation is under way.

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