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Newsletter from the Macular Degeneration Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 531313 Henderson, NV 89053
<http://www.eyesight.org>

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Pegaptanib Sodium (Macugen) Leads to Significant Increase in Intraocular Pressure in Patients With Pre-Existing Glaucoma: Presented at ARVO, by Earl R. Nichols - FT. LAUDERDALE, F.L. - May 1, 2006

Patients whose age-related macular degeneration (ARMD) is treated with pegaptanib sodium (Macugen) may run the risk of significantly increased intraocular pressure (IOP) that could eventually spell trouble for their optic nerves.

In a presentation April 30th at the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) annual meeting, investigators discussed how the use of Macugen can lead to increases in IOP that could ultimately prove harmful to patients with pre-existing glaucoma.

This study involved only patients with pre-existing glaucoma and for those patients, any change in IOP should be viewed with concern, according to the researchers. While they would not say this should definitely preclude such patients from receiving Macugen in the treatment of macular degeneration, physicians should view each case individually, and they may want to exercise added caution in offering such injections to patients with glaucoma.

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Teaming up to battle vision loss - Merck, Harvard hope deal will help create macular degeneration drug - Bernadette Tansey, San Francisco Chronicle Staff Writer - May 24, 2006

Merck Co. said it has signed a deal with Harvard Medical School in the hope of finding a drug to treat the most common form of macular degeneration, a deterioration of the retina that has caused vision loss in millions of people.

Like a camera loaded with photographic film, the eye contains a field of light-sensitive grains that change chemically on exposure to form an image. But the eye can recycle its film, rapidly returning the light sensors to their original form so they can capture the next scene, much like a digital camera. The recycling process, however, is not perfect. And its quirks have been linked to an eye disease that afflicts millions of people.

Merck will consult with Harvard Medical School Professor Robert Rando, who studies the chemical pathways in the eye called the visual cycle. Rando says the normal processes of vision produce a toxic byproduct called lipofuscin that doesn't seem to be cleared away by the eye's regeneration mechanisms.

"Lipofuscin accumulation appears to be a major risk factor for macular degeneration," Rando said. The problematic compound results from inefficiencies in the recycling of the eye's light-sensitive photoreceptors. One of the worrisome issues with the lipofuscins is that they are insoluble and form aggregates akin to plaques."

Photoreceptor components in the eye called chromophores undergo a chemical change when exposed to light. The chromophores are repaired, but in their modified form they can also react with lipids in the retina to form lipofuscins. Rando experimented with inhibitors that can slow key steps in the visual cycle. Those inhibitors also reduced the production of lipofuscin in mice. Merck plans to explore that approach in a search for a small-molecule drug, taken orally, to treat macular degeneration.

Rando estimates that 15 million people in the United States have age-related macular degeneration, and of those, about 13.5 million have the dry form. The condition can lead to blurring or distortion of central vision and the development of blind spots.

If Merck develops a drug that slows the visual cycle to decrease lipofuscin production, the drug may interfere somewhat with night vision. But Rando said the loss might be minimal.

"If you were losing your day vision, your high-acuity vision, and the effect of the drug was seeing a little less well at night, you'd probably make that trade," Rando said. The drug development strategy inspired by Rando's work could also lead to a remedy for Stargardt disease, a juvenile form of blindness linked to high levels of lipofuscin.

As part of the partnership deal, Merck receives licenses to certain inhibitors of the visual cycle, and exclusive rights to Rando's intellectual property related to that area of his research. Harvard will receive a \$3 million up-front payment, other fees as the work reaches certain milestones, and a share of royalties on any products that result from the agreement.

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A FREE WEB MAGNIFYING TOOL

Newsrelease sent by Brad Haugaard, Project Manager for Big.com - PASADENA, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--March 20, 2006

Big.com - a new search engine developed to deliver search results to users in a large, easy to read format - today announces the immediate availability of the Big.com Web Magnifier. Available from <http://www.big.com/toolbar> as a free, downloadable toolbar for use with Internet Explorer web browsers, Web Magnifier provides users with the ability to enlarge the text and graphics of any HTML web page for easier reading and navigation.

The trend of decreasing font sizes in web design has made navigating the web an increasingly difficult task for many Internet users. According to the American Council of the Blind, nearly 8 million Americans are unable to read regular print even with reading glasses, and the number is expected to grow as the population ages. Not just for web users with impaired vision, Web Magnifier can also be useful when reading the fine print of an online contest or a site's privacy policy - both of which are typically displayed in smaller front sizes - or to simply increase the size of a photo to reveal more detail.

"Whether it's for design reasons or space constraints on a given page, text and images on the web seem to be getting smaller and smaller," said Tom McGovern, CEO of Big.com. "With the Big.com Web Magnifier, we hope to give users' eyes much needed relief and allow them to enjoy the web in a way that works better for them."

Web Magnifier sits as a toolbar at the top of a user's screen and contains a Big.com search box for immediate web searches as well as 3 buttons for the various levels of magnification - normal, big and bigger. Once a page is magnified to the desired level, Web Magnifier remembers the setting and automatically adjusts the magnification on subsequent visits to the page. Additionally, the toolbar itself can be displayed in large and standard sizes.

System requirements for the Big.com Web Magnifier include Microsoft Windows 2000/XP, Internet Explorer 6.0, 1MB hard drive space and 128 MB of RAM.

Big.com is a service of Perfect Market Technologies, Inc., and is dedicated to providing an easy-to-view web experience through its large-format search engine and its Web Magnifier toolbar for Internet Explorer.

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FROM: True Life: I'm Blind

If you are blind and dealing with the everyday challenges that come with vision loss, MTV's True Life would love to hear your story. If you are between the ages of 16-28 and have a compelling background story, please tell us all about it.

If you fit these criteria, and are living life with blindness, e-mail us at: blind@mtvnmix.com with all the details of your story. Please be sure to include your name, location, phone number and a photo if possible.

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Article From The HEALTHMATTERS Newsletter
"LEARN TO LAUGH YOU'LL LIVE LONGER"

Did you know that laughter is good for your health? The human brain is wired in such a way that it cannot produce stress hormones and "feel good" endorphins at the same time. As soon as you start to laugh, your brain makes the switch. So whenever you're feeling stressed, just start laughing. It makes no difference to your brain whether your laugh is "forced" or not. You still get the benefits. Humor may be your best defense against the stresses of life. Laughing can:

- Reduce stress
- Help you relax
- Lower blood pressure
- Make you "feel" better
- Improve how the brain works
- Protect your heart
- ŠImprove relationships

The world isn't going to become less stressful any time soon. So, laugh all you want. Say, have you heard any good jokes lately?

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OPTOTABS THE SUPPLEMENT OF CHOICE

We appreciate the support many of our subscribers have provided to the Macular Degeneration Foundation by the purchase of the OPTOTABS formula. This supplement provides the formula identified by the National Institute of Health as high-level antioxidant and also includes lutein and zeaxanthin which have been found beneficial in later studies. To order this product on line go to www.optogon.com or call 1-800-924-4393.

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CONTACTING MDF

To speak to a support representative directly, you may call 1-888-633-3937. If you reach our voice mail, please speak slowly and distinctly.

ORDERING BOOKS & TAPES

When purchasing items from Amazon.com, please remember to use the MDF search box located at <http://www.eyesight.org/Books/books.html> . By simply originating your search from our website, Amazon rewards the Foundation with a small commission from each product you order. Thank you.

MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS:

Please make checks payable to Macular Degeneration Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 531313, Henderson, Nevada 89053, or you may use your credit card on our web site <http://www.eyesight.org/Donations/donations.html> . Your contributions make our services available as a support system for macular degeneration patients in the following ways:

1. We provide toll-free lines for personal contact assistance.
2. We mail brochures and other printed materials upon request.
3. We support an award-winning web site that provides the latest up-to-date information.
4. We fund research proposal grants to provide therapies for both the wet and dry form of AMD. Contributions marked "research" are used 100% for research.

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MDF was founded in 1992 by Edmund J. Aleksandrovich Ph.D (a victim of macular degeneration). It provides MD patients and their families with the information necessary to understand the disease, the latest news concerning ways to cope with the disease, and supports the efforts of researchers to find a cure.

Subscribers who wish to cancel their subscription or change their email address may visit: <http://www.eyesight.org/Newsletter/newsletter.html> .

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