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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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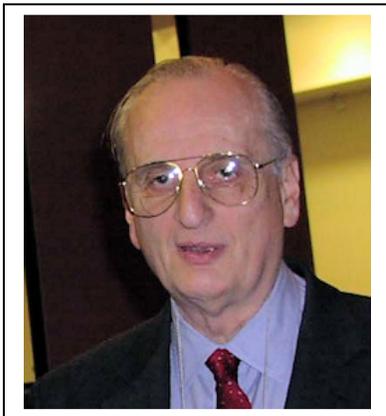
Folkman: Pioneer in War on Cancer and Blindness Dies at 74

<http://www.sunherald.com/447/story/306559.html>

Posted on Thu, Jan. 17, 2008

Helen Keller Foundation Praises Folkman in Macular Degeneration
And Diabetic Retinopathy Advances

Article by The Helen Keller Foundation



BIRMINGHAM, Ala., Jan. 17 — Dr. Judah Folkman, a giant in U.S. cancer and eye disease research, died on Tuesday, Jan. 15, from an apparent heart attack. According to Dr. Robert Morris, president of the Helen Keller Foundation for Research and Education, “His discoveries have already become a successful and revolutionary treatment for age-related macular degeneration, the leading cause of new blindness in people over 65 years of age.” Folkman’s work founded an entire branch of cancer research called anti-angiogenesis therapy that also led to major medical advancements and treatments for eye diseases, but particularly age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and diabetic retinopathy.

Dr. Folkman was the 2006 recipient of the Helen Keller Prize for Vision Research. His 1971 hypothesis that solid tumors are angiogenesis-dependent initiated studies of angiogenesis in tumor biology and a year later expanded this to suggest that anti-angiogenic therapy could be useful in a number of non-neoplastic diseases,

including eye disease. This thought-provoking hypothesis lead researchers to the discovery of the first angiogenic inhibitor for AMD, which was a major milestone in ophthalmology and laid the groundwork for the creation of new drug treatment therapies for eye disease that include Macugen, Avastin, Lucentis and the promising VEGF-TRAP.

The Helen Keller Prize, awarded by the Helen Keller Foundation For Research and Education, honors physicians and scientists worldwide in their efforts to end blindness. Thanks to Dr. Folkman's 36 years of research, over 1.2 million patients worldwide are now receiving anti-angiogenic therapy for diseases that include macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, cancer, arthritis, as well as diseases of the heart and skin. Because of Dr. Folkman's vision, 10 new cancer drugs are currently on the market and people who might otherwise be blind have a chance at sight.

A transcript of Dr. Judah Folkman's acceptance speech for the 2006 Helen Keller Prize is available online at www.helenkellerfoundation.org/folkman/.

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LONG-TERM MACULAR DEGENERATION TREATMENT STUDY GETS HELP FROM THE UNIVERSITY of IOWA

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071219/LIFE02/712190352/1039/LIFE>

December 19, 2007

"Researchers are trying to find better treatments for macular degeneration". Article written by - Mary Challender.

In August 2006, the National Eye Institute of the National Institutes of Health awarded a five-year, \$14.6 million grant to a University of Iowa-led effort to turn two recent genetic discoveries into possible treatments.

Researchers at the University of Iowa and other institutions have determined that two genes - complement factor H and factor B - account for nearly three of four cases of age-related macular degeneration. These genes are instrumental in the function of an important protein involved in controlling inflammation.

Scientists are hopeful that replacing, augmenting or removing the malfunctioning protein could delay or even prevent age-related macular degeneration.

The University of Iowa also is participating in a long-term study testing a steroid called anecortave acetate (Retaane) in the treatment of the wet form of age-related macular degeneration. Advantages of the drug - if it is proven effective - are that it blocks blood vessels earlier in the process than the anti-VEGF drugs; it's injected behind the eye rather than directly into it; and it only needs to be administered every six months.

Millie Thornton of Johnston has been part of the Anecortave Acetate Risk Reduction trial for almost three years. She became part of the test program after losing most of the vision in her left eye to the aggressive wet form of age-related macular degeneration about four years ago.

The recommended treatment at the time, cold laser, failed to save her eyesight and actually worsened it, she said. Now, she's hoping to preserve vision in her good right eye, which has a nearly one-in-two chance of also developing the disorder. Every six months, Thornton makes the two-hour drive to Iowa City to have a battery of tests done on her good eye and receive an injection. Her treatment costs and some expenses are paid for.

She doesn't know if she's getting the actual drug or a placebo, but said so far her good eye is holding its own. Thornton can still read with trifocals and drive. Living with age-related macular degeneration can be hard, she said, but the study at least gives her hope. "I'm so glad I've done this," she said. "I think anyone who has the opportunity should go and try. Otherwise, if you do nothing, it can get bad real quickly."

(Additional Information): To find trial locations, go to www.clinicaltrials.gov and follow the directions. If you would like to contact the NIH Clinical Center Information Line, call 1-866-444-8805 and a study coordinator will do the search for you. They are available from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m EST. Remember, when you are participating in a study trial, you may be getting the drug compound or you may be getting a placebo.

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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.

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