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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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CONTRAST FOR INDEPENDENCE

Article by: Julie Zavala
Taken from AFB Senior Site
<http://www.afb.org/>

Contrast is a simple and yet invaluable tool in independent living for people living with low vision. Take a moment to think about how much easier it is to see a white plate on a black tablecloth than on a beige one. As you look around your home, notice how difficult it is to find a white light switch when it is on a white wall, to see cabinet pulls that are the same or similar color as the cabinets, or locate doorways that are the same color as the walls. Below are a few ideas as presented by the American Foundation for the Blind to create contrasts in your home.

- * If your walls are a light color, install a dark-colored light switch and dark trim around doorways or vice versa.
- * Install doorknobs that contrast in color with your doors.
- * Mark the edge of stairs or steps with tape in a contrasting color so that they are more visible.
- * Avoid upholstery with a pattern, as that can be visually confusing.
- * Use contrasting floor materials when changing rooms. Difference in flooring texture and color can help a person living with low vision to determine what room they are in.
- * Use solid colored dishes for eating. Patterns on dishes can make it difficult for people living with low vision to see the food against the design.
- * Use dishes that contrast with the table or tablecloth so that glasses and dishes are to easier find.
- * Use hardware that contrasts with the color of drawers and cabinets.

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CCTV MAGNIFIERS CAN BE DONATED TO MDF

We often get calls from families who would like to donate a CCTV and ask how this process works. We pay for the packing and shipping with a credit card when the item is picked up. Anyone that is interested in that type of donation can call 888-633-3937 and we can arrange for the machine to be shipped. The benefactors of this donation are identified ahead of time. They have been screened by a low vision service and arrangements are in place for training on the machine. Without training, it is difficult for a person with significant vision loss to have a successful benefit from a reading machine.

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We love it when our subscribers take time to call or write with their positive remarks (ie), Dorothy from Brooklyn, New York called, "I can't thank you enough for taking time to talk with me and send me information"! "Julie Zavala, the Assistant Director of Operations, was very informative!"

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NEW PRODUCTS FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

<http://www.knfbreader.com/>

The Mobile Reader Product Line from knfbReading Technologies, Inc., is a major advancement in portability and functionality of print access for the blind, the vision impaired and those with reading difficulties.

The knfbReader Mobile and kReader Mobile software packages run on a multifunction cell phone that allow the user to read mail, receipts, handouts and many other documents wherever the user happens to be. This is a truly pocket-sized solution to reading on the go. The knfbReader Mobile software has a feature set designed for blind or low vision users. The kReader Mobile is designed for people who have difficulty reading due to learning or language problems.

knfbReading Technologies is a joint venture between Kurzweil Technologies and the National Federation of the Blind.

The Nokia Cell phone is loaded with software that turns text on photographed documents into speech. While the technology is not new, the NFB and the software's developer say the cell phone is the first to incorporate the text-to-speech ability. The price tag on this device is \$2,100.

K-NFB Reading Technology Inc is marketing the phone as a joint venture with software developer Ray Kurzweil. Future versions of the device will recognize faces, identify rooms and translate text from other languages for the blind and the sighted. To find out more, call the Nokia Cell phone dealer in your area.

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USING A NEW ALGORITHM, RESEARCHERS ARE TRYING TO ENHANCE PICTURE QUALITY SO THAT THOSE WITH MD CAN ENJOY TV

<http://www.abcnews.go.com/Technology>

“Enjoying a favorite TV show can be difficult for someone with MD. Now researchers at the Schepens Eye Research Institute have developed software that lets users manipulate the contrast to create specially enhanced images for those with MD. ‘Our approach was to implement an image-processing algorithm to the receiving television’s decoder,’ says Eli Peli, a professor of ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School and the project leader. ‘The algorithm makes it possible to increase the contrast of specific size details.’”

The prototype system built by Analog Devices will be available by summer. Stay tuned for more developments on the marketing date for this product.

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COMPANY RAISES \$12 MILLION TO HELP FUND STUDY OF VISION DRUG

By Patrick Howington phowington@courier-journal.com April 9, 2008

(Excerpts taken from original article): “Potentia Pharmaceuticals, a young Louisville drug-development company, has completed a \$12 million round of fundraising to help it move its potentially groundbreaking vision drug through clinical trials. The drug could become the first to win approval for treating the most common form of macular degeneration, the dry form. The compound sprang from recent discoveries that an immune-system response to bacteria or viruses, if unchecked, might harm eye cells. POT-4 binds tightly to a protein involved in that response, keeping damage from occurring.”

(From the Potentia Pharmaceuticals Inc web site) “The immune-system response or complement activation is an inflammatory process involving dozens of plasma proteins, ultimately leading to cell membrane disruption through the membrane attack complex. Activation of the complement system is an important part of the body’s defensive immune response against pathogens such as bacteria and viruses. In spite of its defensive function, inappropriate or excessive complement activation can have pathological consequences. Multiple studies published over the past 2 years have strongly linked the complement system to the pathology of AMD. POT-4 is a synthetic peptide discovered by Professor John Lambris at the University of Pennsylvania. It binds tightly to complement component C3, preventing its participation in the complement activation cascade. As C3 is the central component of all major complement activation pathways, its inhibition effectively shuts down all downstream complement activation that could otherwise lead to local inflammation, tissue damage, and upregulation of angiogenic factors such as vascular endothelial growth factor. The FDA approval may be up to five years away from commercial use.”

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PUT A FRESH MANGO IN YOUR SHOPPING CART!

A mango is rich in natural sugar (glucose), which is the fuel energy. It is also rich in carotene and vitamin A that protects the eyes especially in case of macular degeneration.

Mangos are a good source of carbohydrates; they are high in fibre, preventing constipation; they are rich in calcium and iron; they have a sufficient quantity of niacin which is useful to lower cholesterol; they are also a good source of vitamin B1 and B2; they are an alkaline food so they are excellent for acidity; they have an anti-oxidant with anti-virus, anti-cardiovascular and anti-cancer properties; they can prevent cholera, anemia, and tuberculosis; they are a rich source of anti-oxidants that help to prevent premature aging and are high in Vitamin C, which increases immunity.

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OPTHERION, INC. COMPLETES \$37 MILLION START UP FINANCING

Optherion, Inc. is an early-stage biotechnology company that is developing products to diagnose and treat dry and wet Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) and other chronic diseases involving the alternative complement system. Optherion's proprietary technologies are based on recent scientific discoveries linking certain genes to AMD. Optherion has offices and laboratories in New Haven, CT., and on the biotechnology campus of the University of Iowa in Coralville, IA.

Optherion's Chief Scientific Officer is Dr. Hageman, the scientific founder of Optherion and a co-discoverer of the relationship of the genetics of CFH and CFB to AMD and MPGN-II. He is the Iowa Entrepreneurial Endowed Professor in the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at the University of Iowa and a pioneer in the role of inflammation and the complement system in AMD. Dr. Hageman is the Principal Investigator of a recently awarded five-year, \$14.6 million grant from the National Institutes of Health/National Eye Institute. Optherion will be a corporate sponsor of this grant. Dr. Hageman has received the Trustee Award from the Foundation Fighting Blindness and the Roger H. Johnson Macular Degeneration Prize for his recent discoveries.

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LOW VISION DOESN'T NEED TO MEAN NO VISION

A bulletin from the Vision Council

<http://www.napsnet.com/articles/58459.html>

“Low vision is an eye condition in which sight cannot be corrected through surgery, pharmaceuticals, eyeglasses or contact lenses. Low vision can be characterized by partial sight, such as blind spots or tunnel vision, but also includes legal blindness. Eye injuries, hereditary factors and eye diseases such as macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy can all lead to low vision. Symptoms of low vision can include: hazy or blurred vision; loss of peripheral vision; color confusion; trouble reading, cooking or doing close-up tasks; difficulty recognizing familiar faces; and light sensitivity (complaints that lights are too dim indoors).”

From Liz: A patient with significant vision loss should look for a low-vision clinic that has an Occupational Therapist on staff. The OT can determine which magnification aide will provide the most benefit. Magnifiers, telescopic eyewear, and CCTV's are some of the tools and devices that can be used to help those with low vision regain their independence. The therapist will also provide the necessary training to make the magnification aide more successful for the patient. Many times the OT is able to come to the patient's home to help with safety issues. To find the nearest low-vision store near you, call SHOP LOW VISION at 1-800-826-4200. You may also ask for a free “Daily living Products” catalog.

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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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