



The Magnifier

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Packaging Pills So They're Easy to Take

There are some pharmacies (although not nearly enough of them) that will prepackage an older person's prescriptions into cardboard containers with plastic pop-out bubbles that are divided into days and times. The person just has to be able to see well enough to see the correct day and period of day ... for example breakfast, lunch, dinner or bedtime. You may check with your pharmacy to see if they offer that service.

Are You Confused About Retinal Transplants?

Only the cornea and sclera can be transplanted; the cornea is the clear dome, which covers the front of the eye, that helps focus light, and the sclera is the white fibrous tissue that protects the eye. However, eye donations lead to additional opportunities for helping patients; scientists can use donated ocular tissue for research and teaching.

One such scientist from the University of Iowa is Robert Mullins, Ph.D. His team uses the donated tissue to study a potential cause of macular degeneration. Seeking ways to diagnose and treat macular degeneration in its early stages, UI scientists have been awarded millions of dollars in NIH funding to study multiple facets of the disorder.

Dr. Mullins does, however, highly recommend eating plenty of beta carotene-rich fruits and vegetables including broccoli, carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach, dark green leafy vegetables, apricots and cantaloupe for optimal health. A leading expert from Emory University recommends eggs, almonds, raspberries, salmon, mango, avocados, and yogurt. Yogurt helps the body absorb the antioxidants.



Excess Servings of Red Meat May Lead to Risk for MD

Researchers from the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital have found people who eat red meat more than 10 times a week experience an increased risk of developing macular degeneration, leading to vision loss. "What we found was that excessive meat intake - more than 10 servings of red meat per week - was associated with about a 47 per cent increased association of early and late macular degeneration. What should we be eating to cut the risk factor? We should eat more trout, flounder, catfish and salmon. People who ate fish two times a week show a 35 percent decrease in AMD. Fish is even better than flaxseed oil because it contains the same type of omega-3, DHA, that's in your eyes.

Opko Health to Terminate Phase III Macular Degeneration Trial

March 9, 2009 OPKO HEALTH, a specialty healthcare company, has been conducting trials for a RNAi therapy to silence the genes that can up-regulate VEGF in wet macular degeneration

Macular Degeneration Foundation

P.O. Box 531313
Henderson, NV 89053

Website:
www.eyesight.org

Telephone:
1-888-633-3937

patients. However, recent discoveries dampened enthusiasm about RNAi therapies. The discoveries involved a protein called toll-like receptor 3 (TLR3) that has been shown to protect against the dry form of AMD (geographic atrophy). Here is the problem: RNAi is used therapeutically to turn off disease-causing genes (e.g., the gene that codes for VEGF).

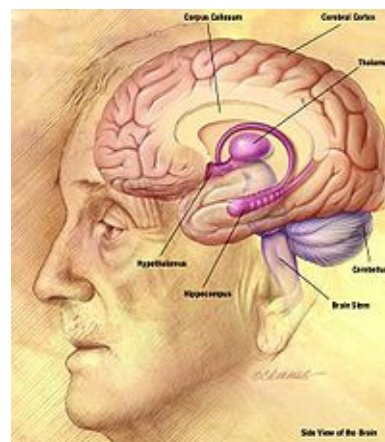
Some people have a mutation in their gene that codes for the TLR3 protein. This mutation is good. It leads to the production of less protein. Less is more in this case. Having low amounts of the TLR3 protein appears to protect against geographic atrophy. Laboratory studies show RNAi therapy interfering with the protective aspect of the TLR3 gene mutation. OPKO Health, following the recommendation of the Independent Data Monitoring Committee, will terminate its Phase III clinical study of Bevasiranib, a siRNA, for the treatment of wet age-related macular degeneration.

Teaching the Brain to See

By Carolyn Murray, Anchor Published: April 7, 2009

“Susan Primo, O.D., M.P.H., Vision Researcher at Emory Eye Center, says most macular degeneration patients eventually learn to compensate for the loss of central vision by using an area of the retina that still works. This undamaged area of the retina is called the preferred retinal locus, or PRL.

Researchers are studying how the brain adapts to this new source of information. Seven patients with macular degeneration had functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans while looking at pictures shown in different parts of their visual field. The investigators found that cells in the area of the brain that normally processes fovea images (the damaged area) begin to reorganize and respond to images in the PRL (the undamaged area). Eric Schumacher, Ph.D., Neuroscientist at Georgia Tech, says these results suggest it may be possible to train the brain to recognize and process images from the PRL, and restore some central vision to macular degeneration patients. A second small study is now underway to determine if researchers can enhance or speed the brain reorganization through techniques like biofeedback. If the training works, a larger study will be needed to confirm the results.”



Revolutionary Genetic Test Now Available for Macular Degeneration

For the first time ever, an individual’s inherent risk of developing this devastating eye disease can be determined! TORONTO, ONTARIO—(Marketwire - March 10, 2009) - ArcticDx Inc., a molecular diagnostic company, announced the availability of a test specifically designed to determine one’s inherited risk for Macular Degeneration.

Seventy-five to eighty percent of all MD has been traced to genes inherited from family members. Until recently, there was no opportunity to determine who may carry these genes or be at risk. The test, Macula Risk(R), changes that. It was developed by a leading geneticist, Dr. Brent Zanke, (Chairman and Chief Medical Officer of ArcticDx) in collaboration with an international group of independent research scientists. Analytical studies have shown this test to be 100% accurate in identifying the MD genes.

Macula Risk(R) is now available as a CLIA-certified laboratory saliva test to anyone who is concerned about a family member or themselves. Individuals diagnosed with drusen should check with their eye care professional to see if the test is right for them.

Dr. David Chow, a world-renowned retinal specialist practicing at St. Michael’s Hospital, Toronto, commented, “Macula Risk(R) will identify patients at risk so they can be diligently monitored as their disease progresses. More information is available on the internet at <http://www.arcticdx.com> .

Sirion Therapeutics Presents Data from Phase II Trial for Dry AMD at ARVO 2009

<http://www.siriontherapeutics.com>

Sirion Therapeutics Inc. announced positive results from a clinical trial evaluating a treatment for certain persons with macular degeneration. The Phase II trial evaluated fenretinide as a treatment for geographic atrophy, the most advanced form of dry age-related macular degeneration. Sirion describes fenretinide, which is taken orally, as a vitamin A binding protein antagonist.

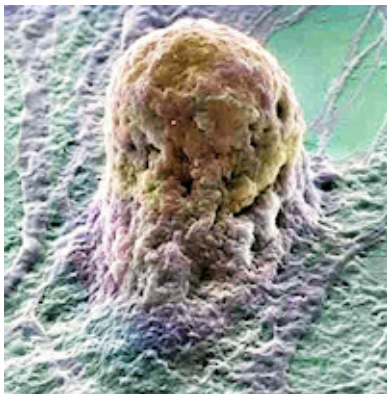
An analysis of the Phase II data showed slower growth of lesions in patients treated with oral fenretinide than in patients who received a placebo, a release from Sirion said. Sirion will continue the Phase II study and will meet with scientific advisers and the Food and Drug Administration to design a Phase III study, the release said.

UCSB To Take Advantage of New Stem Cell Policy

<http://www.dailynews.com/article.php?a=18632>

Excerpts taken from this article by Sara-Fay Katz / Staff Writer Published April 8, 2009

“After eight years in the cold, stem cell research is poised to benefit from the open support of the Obama administration.



Dennis Clegg, chair of the Dept. of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology said new research into regenerative medicines such as stem cells has the potential to render many fatal diseases harmless, or at least make them readily treatable. “We are in a very exciting time for stem cell research right now,” Clegg said. “Stem cell research has great potential for treating a variety of human diseases like macular degeneration, diabetes, Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s.” A co-director of strategy, planning and operations at the UCSB Center for Stem Cell Biology and Engineering, Clegg said UCSB has the power to make major advancements in the growing field.

Lincoln Johnson, Associate Director of the Center for the Study of Macular Degeneration, said the removal of the ban now ensures more options for the treatment of human diseases using natural mechanisms. “Not all embryonic stem cell lines are the same,” Johnson said. “So for instance, with cardiac muscle for the treatment heart disease, one stem cell line might be better than another, so it’s important to have a variety. For regenerative medicine such as constructing organs, having a wider variety of stem cells to choose from will help better match the donor organ to the recipient.” Despite the avenues of stem cell research opened by the Obama administration, Johnson said the field is still in its infancy.

For those interested in learning more about stem cell research, you may consult the UCSB Center for Stem Cell Biology and Engineering’s Web site, <http://www.stemcell.ucsb.edu>

Stem Cell Therapy Developed in London

LONDON, April 19, 2009 (UPI) –“British scientists say they have developed a stem cell procedure that will reverse the most common cause of blindness, age-related macular degeneration.

The procedure, pioneered by the Institute of Ophthalmology at University College London and Moorfields Eye Hospital, involves replacing a layer of degenerated eye cells with new ones obtained from embryonic stem cells, The Sunday Times of London reported. The newspaper said pharmaceutical research company Pfizer this week will announce financial backing to bring the therapy to patients.

This is a huge step forward for patients," Tom Bremridge, chief executive of the Macular Disease Society, told The Sunday Times. "We are extremely pleased that the big guns have become involved, because, once this treatment is validated, it will be made available to a huge volume of patients." The researchers hope that within five or six years the treatment will become a routine, one-hour procedure on an outpatient basis.

Macular Degeneration Foundation Admitted to International Alliance

The AMD Alliance International is a global network of over 60 macular disease advocates in 23 member countries. The Macular Degeneration Foundation is pleased to join the Alliance in our common effort to promote awareness, treatment and research into this disease.



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.

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>. 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.