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Macular
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The Magnifier

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Age-Related Eye Disease Declining in U.S.

The rate of age-related macular degeneration, has shown a 30% decrease in the last 20 years.

The study from 1988-1994 found that the rate of AMD among Americans 40 and older was 9.4%. The study published in the January, 2011 issue of the Archives of Ophthalmology found that only 6.5% of the participants were found to have the disease.

The data was taken from more than 7,000 participants.

Advanced Cell Technology (ACT) Starts Clinical Trial

After 10 years of research in animal studies and more than \$20 million investor dollars, the first Phase II stem cell clinical trial has received a green light from the FDA.

Twelve patients at various sites including Stanford and UCLA will be providing the initial data that will determine the safety and efficacy for this treatment of geographic atrophy (an advanced form of dry AMD).

The injection of this type of cell that can both replenish itself and differentiate into the retinal pigment epithelium or RPE, which begins to deteriorate early in the course of the disease. RPE cells help support the photoreceptors that translate light signals from the environment into electrical signals for the brain to process.

Without healthy retinal pigment epithelium, the photoreceptors begin to sicken and die, causing loss of vision.

Questions are pouring in regarding the process to participate in a clinical trial. Ultimately your Retinal Specialist must make the recommendation. Every clinical trial has a process to determine the patient's eligibility as a candidate.

For more information on clinical trials in progress click on <http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/clinicalstudies/> or call 1-877-273-3780.



New Treatment Possible for Dry AMD

A new study published in the February 2011 journal Nature reports that dysfunction of an enzyme called DICER1 may be a cause of dry AMD.

Researchers at the University of Kentucky found that levels of the enzyme are higher in healthy retinas than in eyes affected by AMD. They demonstrated that low DICER1 levels lead to buildup of a toxic genetic material called alu, which causes geographic atrophy.

Two treatments may potentially halt the progression of the disease: one which boosts levels of the enzyme, and the other which breaks down the toxic Alu RNA. To test the hypothesis, the University of Kentucky is planning to start human trials by the end of 2011.



“While age-related vision loss of catastrophic proportions is predicted in coming decades, rising from 17 million patients today to 55 million by the year 2050, it’s possible this catastrophe could be averted and lost vision even restored using molecular medicine.”

These are the words of Stuart Richer, OD, PhD, speaking at the 10th annual meeting and International Conference on Recent Trends in Therapeutic Advancement of Free Radical Science, in Chennai, India today.

Dr. Richer says modern medicine is just beginning to evaluate data from the first cases

where conventional medical and surgical efforts to restore lost vision had been exhausted and a molecular medicine approach was employed. “While I must qualify what I am saying by noting that the severity of retinal disease may improve on its own, I have now documented three consecutive cases where molecular medicine appears to have restored the normal architecture of the human retina and measurably improved visual function that could not be accomplished with conventional care. In one of these cases, vision improved when the patient took an oral a mineral-chelating antioxidant

Will Molecular Medicine Restore Lost Sight in Aged People?

From: Nanomedicine

(Longevinex) and deteriorated when the patient ceased taking the antioxidant cocktail, which suggests cause and effect,” he says.

“The small molecules in the nutritional cocktail we used, such as resveratrol, quercetin, rice bran phytate, as provided in commercially-available product

“it’s possible this catastrophe could be averted”

called Longevinex, appear to work synergistically and more powerfully in animal studies of heart disease, which is why it was chosen for compassionate use in these individual cases of age-related eye disease,” says Dr. Richer.



New Gene Therapy for Wet AMD

Oxford Biomedica, a gene therapy company in the U.K., has received FDA authorization to launch a clinical trial of its RetinoStat® gene therapy for the treatment of wet age-related macular degeneration.

Eighteen people will be enrolled in the Phase I/II clinical trial to be conducted at The Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins under the

leadership of Peter Campochiaro, M.D. RetinoStat® may prove more effective than current treatments, because a single injection could potentially protect against new blood vessel growth (neovascularization) under the retina for several years.

RetinoStat® is one of three gene therapies being developed by Oxford Biomedica, the oth-

ers being StarGen® for Stargardt disease and UshStat® for Usher syndrome. All three therapies use viruses to deliver the corrective gene to the retina.



Resource Locator

Lee Boncher, MDF’s Director of Resources, is available at 1-888-866-6148 to assist those looking for local low-vision services, organizations and agencies.

Self-Help Guide

People who are in the intermediate to late stage of vision loss may consider making the transition from visual to nonvisual practices in some daily activities.

A free guide is available from MD Support that features a self evaluation of 21 personal daily living activities.

It is available for download at www.mdsupport.org/guide.pdf

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Please visit our website at eyesight.org to make a tax deductible donation or contact us more information.

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