Age-Related Macular Degeneration

World-class panel discusses current and future research initiatives

More than 250 community members attended the Age-Related Macular Degeneration Town Meeting on March 2 at Sibley Memorial Hospital. Moderated by Emily Chew, M.D., the meeting addressed past therapy, current treatments, future research, low vision rehabilitation, and patient perspectives.

Among future research initiatives, bringing hope to those at risk for age-related macular degeneration (AMD), included prevention strategies such as clinical and genetic screenings, dietary supplement research surrounding macular pigments and omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil), and decreasing body inflammation. (Continue page 4)

In This Issue:

Calendar of Events ...........2

AMD Town Meeting Update (Continue) ..........4

Eyes on the News “AMD Doubles Risk” ........6
• Wednesday, April 2, 2008
Low Vision Support Group, 10 a.m.
Asbury Methodist Village
201 Russell Avenue
Gaithersburg, MD

• Thursday, April 3, 2008
Stargardt’s Network, 6:15 p.m.
Baja Fresh, Dupont Circle
1333 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C.

• Saturday, April 12, 2008
Macular Degeneration Network, “Cataract Update: Clearing Up the Questions About Cataracts,” 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Lisa Collea, M.D., Colleen Joseph, M.D., and Michael Tigani, M.D., ophthalmologists
First Connection, 9:30 a.m.
Sibley Memorial Hospital, Ernst Auditorium
5255 Loughboro Road, NW
Washington, D.C.

• Tuesday, April 15, 2008
Friendship Heights Vision Support Group,
“Eye Medications: Side Effects and Potential Drug Interactions,” 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.
Howard Weiss, M.D., ophthalmologist
Friendship Heights Village Center
4433 Southpark Avenue
Chevy Chase, MD
Bring a bag lunch, refreshments provided.
Calendar of Events

• Wednesday, April 16, 2008
Share Group, 10:30 a.m.
Vinson Hall
6251 Old Dominion Drive
McLean, VA

• Tuesday, April 22, 2008
Low Vision Support Group, 11 a.m.
Janet Morrison, group discussion leader
Washington Hospital Center
110 Irving Street, NW
Washington, D.C.
Lunch provided, call (202) 877-6081 to reserve lunch.

• Wednesday, April 23, 2008
Share Group, 10:30 a.m.
Classic Residence by Hyatt
8100 Connecticut Avenue
Chevy Chase, MD

• Wednesday, April 23, 2008
Aging Eye Network, “Retina Research Update,” 1:15 p.m.
Michael Lai, M.D., ophthalmologist and retina surgeon
Vision Screenings and Resource Information,
10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Holiday Park
3950 Ferrara Drive
Silver Spring, MD

For more information on these events, please call POB at (202) 234-1010
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(Continue from page 1)

While no present treatment exists for advanced “dry” AMD, current studies underway include antioxidant eyedrops, Copaxone (a drug used for multiple sclerosis), CNTF (growth factor eye implant), complement inhibitor eye injections, Fenretinide (a drug that binds vitamin A) and selective RPE laser treatment. Research for “wet” AMD faces the challenge of achieving long term disease control and disease regression. In an attempt to help restore sight for those with longstanding advanced AMD, current studies include a retina chip, retinal cell transplantation, and high- and low-tech vision solutions.

Low Vision Rehabilitation for Veterans

- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provides low vision rehabilitation services and low vision aids for eligible veterans. Call your local Veterans Hospital—Baltimore, Maryland (410) 605-7000, ext. 5124; Richmond, Virginia (804) 675-5221 and Washington, D.C. metropolitan (District of Columbia; Montgomery & Prince Georges Counties, Maryland; and Northern Virginia) (202) 745-8621.
Low Vision Rehabilitation Services

- Local rehabilitation services are provided through states and local government agencies—Maryland State Division of Rehabilitation Services (410) 544-9385, Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (703) 359-1100 and Washington, D.C. Rehabilitation Services Administration, Vision Impairment Section (202) 442-8628.

- Low vision rehabilitation centers like the Lions Vision Research and Rehabilitation Center at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Wilmer Eye Institute, can help you maintain independency and productivity—(410) 955-0580. Call POB at (202) 234-1010 for more information about providers.

Fundraiser Nights for POB!

Tuesday, April 8, 5 - 9 p.m.
Cheeburger, Cheeburger
Falls Grove Village Center
14921 Shady Grove Road
Rockville, MD

Wednesday, April 30, 5 - 9 p.m.
Hamlet Restaurant & Bar
10400 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda, MD

15 percent of sales benefit POB!
Australian researchers from the Centre for Vision Research in the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Sydney are cautioning ophthalmologists and general practitioners to be aware of a positive long-term link between age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and cardiovascular disease when managing risk factors such as smoking, blood pressure and blood lipids in patients with AMD.

In a study conducted by lead researcher Dr. Paul Mitchell, researchers found that for people under 75, when the study began, early AMD was linked with a doubling of their risk of dying from heart attack or stroke over the next 10 years.

Mitchell attributed shared risk factors such as smoking with vascular risk.

Dr. Gregg C. Fonarow, professor of cardiology at the University of California, Los Angeles, also noted that AMD and cardiovascular disease share other common risk factors including high blood pressure and blood lipids as
well as inflammation. Fonarow advises patients and physicians to take appropriate steps in lowering risk through lifestyle changes and cardiovascular protective therapies.


8 Steps for Lowering Risk of Heart Disease

1. Regular exercise—as little as 15 minutes of moderate exercise (gardening, housework, brisk walking, swimming) twice a day, five days a week, increases heart efficiency, lowers blood pressure, controls body weight, balances blood clotting factors and reduces stress.
2. Improve your diet—low-fat diets promote a good balance of blood fats and help maintain healthy body weight.
3. Maintain healthy body weight—guards against developing diabetes, high blood pressure and high-risk weight around the abdomen.
4. Stop smoking—smoking increases adrenalin and heart rate, raises blood pressure, and decreases body’s oxygen-carrying capacity.
5. Lower your blood pressure—it strains the heart and encourages hardening of the arteries.
6. Drink alcohol sensibly—moderate drinkers have less risk of heart diseases than excessive drinkers.
7. Reduce stress—prolonged high levels raise adrenalin levels, heart rate and blood pressure.
8. Control diabetes—diabetes doubles the risk of heart attack and stroke.
Save the Date

May 1: Stargardt’s Network, Baja Fresh, Dupont Circle, 6:15 p.m.
May 10: Macular Degeneration Network, Sibley Memorial Hospital, First Connection 9:30 a.m., Program 10:30 a.m.
May 12: “Technology Quest: Low Vision Options,” Assistive Devices Fair, Hollin Hall Senior Center, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
May 19: Vision Awareness Day, “Protecting Your Eyes: Good Drugs vs. Bad Drugs,” Arlington Central Library, 1 - 3 p.m.
May 20: Bag Lunch Discussion, Friendship Heights, 12:30 p.m.
May 27: Low Vision Support Group, Washington Hospital Center, 11 a.m.

Prevention of Blindness Society
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To receive E-mail reminders about upcoming events, please send an E-mail to jheilman@youreyes.org.