



Australian scientist awarded grant for sight-saving research **World Sight Day 11 October**

An inspirational research scientist exploring dietary and lifestyle interventions into Australia's leading cause of blindness will be the recipient of the Blackmores Dr Paul Beaumont Research Fellowship.

The Macular Degeneration Foundation has announced Dr Bamini Gopinath as the recipient of the 2013-14 Blackmores Dr Paul Beaumont Research Fellowship.

"This is an important fellowship dedicated to research into the dietary and lifestyle impacts on macular degeneration," said Neal Mercado, Director of Blackmores Institute. "Dr Gopinath's work will contribute to our understanding of how this degenerative disease is prevented and managed which will hopefully save the sight of those at risk."

The fellowship is valued at \$100,000 over two years and is largely funded by Blackmores Institute and the Blackmore Foundation with support from the Macular Degeneration Foundation's research fund. Further contributions for the research are being provided by the Westmead Millennium Institute and the National Heart Foundation.

CEO of the MD Foundation, Julie Heraghty, stated: "This is really important research and the MD Foundation is grateful for Blackmores' support in helping find reasons and answers for this devastating disease."

Dr Gopinath is a senior research fellow at the Centre for Vision Research, Westmead Millennium Institute and will be working under the supervision of Professor Paul Mitchell, one of the world's leading experts in Macular Degeneration. Her proposed research involves a detailed analysis of the 15 year data from the landmark Blue Mountains Eye Study (BMES) to improve knowledge of the nutritional and lifestyle risk and protective factors (particularly dietary antioxidant and supplement intake, diet quality and food groups). This is expected to help explain the causes of disease, improve early detection of people at risk of progression, and facilitate new approaches to therapy.

The assessment will include a comprehensive analysis of changes in behaviour in people diagnosed with AMD in the initial BMES exams, a significant gap in existing knowledge.

Dr Gopinath also intends to pool data with other leading international studies including the Beaver Dam Eye Study and the Rotterdam Study, and conduct a meta-analysis to strengthen statistical power and help confirm key risk or protective factors.

"Dr Gopinath has a remarkable track record with over 70 research publications in the last five years, more than half on which she was the lead author," said Neal Mercado. "We're delighted to support her continued research and look forward to the results of her work."

About Macular Degeneration

Macular Degeneration (MD) is a progressive, chronic disease of the macula (central retina) at the back of the eye. Macular Degeneration leads to a loss of central vision, affecting the ability to read, drive, recognise faces and perform activities requiring detailed vision. Macular Degeneration is a chronic disease with no cure. Macular Degeneration is the leading cause of blindness and serious vision loss in Australia, and is responsible for 50% of all blindness in this country. 1 in 7 people over 50 have some evidence of the disease and the incidence increases with age. It is also known as Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD).