



Macular Degeneration Foundation®

Macular Degeneration Foundation Newsletter - Autumn 2005

Macular Degeneration - The leading cause of blindness in Australia

World Health Organisation announces Macular Degeneration as the leading cause of blindness in developed countries

The World Health Organisation has now elevated Macular Degeneration (MD) to the third leading cause of blindness globally and the leading cause of blindness in developed countries¹.

Australia presently has 800,000 people with some form of MD. It continues to be the leading cause of blindness. This highlights the seriousness of the disease and indicates the level of research that is still required into MD.

A recent Access Economics Report (August 2004) concluded that "now is the time to act on the state of vision loss in Australia". It

further stated "there must be a substantial increase in research into causes of vision loss and blindness that cannot be prevented at present, adequate funding to eye care services and appropriately resourced long-term eye health promotion initiatives"².

The Foundation is a major patient driven body that facilitates research, raises awareness and supports those with MD. The organisation works closely with other major health organisations to lobby the government for increased funding for medical research into Macular Degeneration.

Focus on Fish

Eating fish twice a week can reduce your risk of developing Macular Degeneration.

The Blue Mountains Eye Study in 1994 was the first international study that looked at the epidemiology of Macular Degeneration in people over fifty years of age.

This study showed that there is a significant protective association from higher fish consumption, with respect to MD³.

Oily fish will give your Omega-3 intake a boost. The Foundation recommends eating oily fish such as Salmon, Tuna and Sardines twice a week. It can be fresh, frozen or tinned (in water).



Did you know?

Deep Sea Bream is in season.

Deep Sea Bream is available in whole or fillet form. It can be baked, steamed or barbecued and blends well with ginger, chilli and coriander.

Combine fish sauce, palm sugar, lime juice, garlic, chilli and coriander as a dressing mixture. Pour over steamed Bream.

Yummy!

1. World Health Organisation, *Magnitude and cause of visual impairment*, Fact sheet November 2004

2. Access Economics, *The economic impact and cost of vision loss in Australia*, August 2004

3. *The Blue Mountains Eye Study*, 1995.

'Take Action Today' Campaign

The MD Foundation Team is travelling to Westfield Shopping Centre's across NSW as part of their 'Take Action Today' campaign. This campaign is an initiative to encourage regular yearly eye checks for MD with their eye care provider. This could be your Optometrist or Ophthalmologist.

Key health messages about diet were conveyed to the passing shoppers by handing out free fresh carrots.

Remember for healthy eyes eat a well balanced diet consisting of fish, coloured fruit and vegetables and nuts.



The Foundation Team at Westfield Eastgardens in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs.

Australians Managing MD; A Research Project

Alison, the Foundation's Research Officer, would once again like to send a big thank you to all of our members who have completed our survey by phone or mail. There are still many of you to be contacted so please, if you can, take the time to help us collect this very important information.

The research is aimed at collecting information to be used to lobby the government for funding in various areas as well as to determine the educational direction of the Foundation. It will give us an idea of how people and families are managing MD, how it has impacted on their lives, how informed they are and most importantly what services they would like the Foundation to provide.

MD Awareness Week 6 - 12 June 2005

What you can do to help.

During Awareness Week contact your local radio station, local paper or local council. Make them aware of MD. You may wish to convey your own personal experience.

Diary Note Seniors Week NSW 14 to 20 March 2005

Contact your local council for a list of activities available during Seniors Week. We will advise of Seniors Week in other states.

Supporters Network... Thank you!

Carolyn Clarke, a talented painter who has Macular Degeneration, held her solo painting exhibition in September 2004. The exhibition was a big success. She donated one of her paintings to be raffled and raised \$600 for the Foundation. Thank you Carolyn!

Thank you to **Gosford Probus** who donated \$250 to the Foundation, as a result of one of our information sessions.

Milton Ockrim, through Channel Marketing Group, arranged a TV segment about Macular Degeneration for viewing in Doctors' waiting rooms across Australia. This has allowed us to reach millions of people, raising awareness of this disease and spreading the word. Thank you Milton!

Thank you to **Joy Davidson** for volunteering to run our Seniors Week Stall and MD Awareness Week Stalls in QLD. Keep up the good work Joy!

Better Sight Ideas by Dr Peter Herse

Who am I? Hello. My name is Dr Peter Herse. I am a Senior Lecturer at the University of NSW, Sydney. I also am a Consultant Optometrist to the Royal Blind Society, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and a number of other organisations for people with visual disability. I have spent many years working with people with MD and helping them use their vision to the best of their ability. This is the first of a series of columns aimed at helping people with MD.

What happens to the vision of people with MD? People with MD often have difficulty seeing small print. Print can look faded, spotty or distorted. Sometimes parts of words disappear. Faces and pictures can be hard to recognise. Colours can fade to pastel shades.

BIGGER, BRIGHTER, BOLDER!

What does this mean?

BIGGER PRINT: If you are having trouble reading small print, then make it bigger! How can you do this?

A simple answer is to get large print books. These books can be found in most public libraries. I can hear many readers saying 'those dusty old red and white large print books are boring and dull!...' not necessarily. Your local library can get lots of much newer large print books sent out through an inter-library loan from your State Library.

Large print book titles can be found on the internet in the online bookstores such as **www.amazon.com**. A large print copy of Dan Brown's 'Da Vinci Code' sells for about \$18. This would make a great birthday gift for someone with MD, so start dropping hints.

There is no need to be isolated from current ideas as most of the major magazines such as Readers Digest are available in large print format. An excellent website for lists of large print magazines is <http://blindreaders.info/lpbooks.html>.

Specially designed stationery. Many commonly used organisers like phone number lists, calendars and diaries are available and can be bought through the Blind Societies' online Resource Shop

<http://catalogue.rbs.org.au/catalog/>.

A final simple but really effective trick is to use a photocopier available in local libraries and some newsagents. Put the print you are trying to read on the photocopier and press the enlarge button to "blow it up" to a readable size. This works really well for many people. A simple trick is to enlarge an A4 page to A3.



These are all really easy and effective tips to help people with MD see more effectively. Try some. They work every time.

If there are any topics that you would like to suggest for the column, write to me:

Dr Peter Herse,
C/- Macular Degeneration Foundation
Suite 1407, 447 Kent St, Sydney NSW 2000.

Next issue: **We will explore 'Bolder and Brighter'.**

A theatrical experience

The Royal Blind Society, Sydney provides a free service for those attending the theatre. This involves a live audio description of visual elements via a small handset.

Contact the Sydney Theatre Company, the Ensemble Theatre, the Canberra Theatre Centre or your State Theatre Company for more information.



Support our vital work

Donations are appreciated, as they enable us to continue our important work, however membership of the Foundation is at no cost. We want to make sure that everybody can access information and support.

If you know of family, friends or an organisation who may wish to receive the MDF newsletter, contact us.

How do I donate to the Foundation?

You can use the enclosed slip and envelope. Donations can also be made over the phone, by mail or in person.

Donations and bequests are gratefully received. Information is available for those wishing to make a bequest. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

Contact us

Suite 1407, 447 Kent St
Sydney NSW 2000

Ph: 1800 111 709

Website: www.mdfoundation.com.au

Thank you letter

"I wish to put into writing my gratitude for the information and support I have received from the Macular Degeneration Foundation. I had never heard of Macular Degeneration until I lost my vision. I spent a considerable amount of time on the telephone to the Foundation voicing my fears and having my questions answered. I found this to be a great comfort in this very difficult time in my life. The Foundation furnished me with so much information and helped me to focus on what I **can** do, not what I can't do. I will be forever grateful"

Mrs Enid Evans, Rockingham W.A

Do you knit?

When knitting choose two contrasting colours of wool such as dark brown and white. A halogen light to shine directly onto your work will also help.

Tip from Mrs A. Monios, Brookvale NSW

Question...

What is your preferred method for receiving this newsletter?

Is it Print, Audio CD or Email?

Let us know by completing the enclosed slip or letting us know next time you're on the phone. This will help us in our planning to tailor our services to meet your needs.



Macular Degeneration Foundation®

Disclaimer This Newsletter is produced by the Macular Degeneration Foundation Australia. It is intended as a Newsletter and its contents do not constitute medical advice and should not be relied on as such. ABN 52096255177.