



Macular Degeneration Foundation®

Macular Degeneration Foundation Newsletter Summer 2004

Macular Degeneration - The leading cause of blindness in Australia

Seasons greetings and a happy and safe New Year

Your donations support Medical Research - Thank you

The generosity shown by so many in donating to the MD Foundation has enabled us to provide a grant of \$40,000 to the Ophthalmic Research Institute of Australia (ORIA). This is the research arm of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO).

The Grant has been awarded to researchers in Western Australia at the Lions Eye

Institute and Centre for Ophthalmology and Visual Science.

Their research project is entitled: "Novel imaging technique for eyes with age related macular degeneration (AMD)."

We will keep you updated on the progress of this research project in future editions of this newsletter.

Your friendly staff at the Foundation's National Office in Sydney

Seasons greetings from the MDF team



Above (left to right): Michael, Alison, Meegan, Angela, Eira and Amy.

Welcome to Meegan McLeod, (NSW Manager) and Eira Battaglia (Education) as new additions to our friendly team.

Goodbye...

After a whirlwind final tour, Lynda Ralston, the Foundation's first Education Coordinator, is hanging up her telephone – switching off her slide projector – and is heading to the volcanoes of Hawaii.

"I've had an unforgettable time at the Foundation," she said. "I'll miss all the people who ring and come to our talks – all the best to you!"

Volunteers play a vital role in the work of the Foundation.

Thank you to all of our fantastic volunteers who make a large contribution and bring a lot of joy to our office.

The Foundation always needs helpers. Ring Meegan if you would like to volunteer on 1800 111 709.

Going forward

- Julie Heraghty was appointed the new CEO and took up the role on October 5th 2004. Julie came to the Foundation with a background in P. R., administration, government and community services.

"It is truly an honour to work for the Foundation. I look forward to meeting many of you at our events throughout the coming year." *Julie.*

- Leslie Lofthouse has take over the reigns as Chairman of the Foundation from Dr Paul Beaumont. Leslie, a highly successful business woman whose mother has macular degeneration, also serves as Chairman of JOBfutures another not-for-profit organisation.

- Dr Paul Beaumont (the immediate past Chairman) continues as a Director, as Chairman of the NSW Chapter and Chairman of the Medical Advisory Committee of the MD Foundation.

- Several new Board Members have been appointed; Dr Peter Herse, University of NSW, Mr Ashley Chapman, retired with a background in accountancy and Information Technology, Mr Peter Reid, a leading Sydney Lawyer and Mr John McCarroll, Financial Advisor.

We have a highly qualified and diverse team of Directors who are truly committed to fighting this disease.



Julie Heraghty



Leslie Lofthouse

Diary Note

Awareness Week

6 to 12 June 2005

Milestones

The Foundation has achieved several milestones this year, not the least of which was the unprecedented success of our Awareness Week in June. Your Patron, Colleen McCullough, was very well received by the media and the community at large.

Paul Beaumont has been interviewed regularly on radio and TV and his talks have always resulted in a huge increase in enquiries.

The Foundations work in the forthcoming year will strive to increase the support for people who have Macular Degeneration.

We continue to lobby the Federal Government

We congratulate Mr Tony Abbott MHR, on his re-election and appointment as Minister for Health. The Foundation looks forward to having an open discussion on critical matters affecting the vision of the elderly population in this country.

There is an opportunity for the Howard

Government in its third term to put the vision of Australians at the top of the health agenda, review and revitalise how we deal with specifically Macular Degeneration in its epidemic proportions in this country.

We will continue to update you on our progress with the Federal Government.

Free Information Sessions

Our education team will be travelling up and down the east coast in the coming months to provide information sessions.

February 2005 - Metropolitan NSW

March 2005 - Southern NSW & Canberra ACT

April 2005 - Gold Coast, Central Coast

May & June 2005 - VIC & North West NSW

We will update you further before we visit your area.

Research Update

There are two steroid molecules and two anti vessel growth molecules that are being injected into eyes to stop further progression of Age-related Wet MD. The results are looking very promising.

One of the steroid molecules is available and is being used in some cases in addition to Photo Dynamic Therapy (PDT, (Visudyne)). It has not been proven to be effective. The other steroid and the anti vessel growth molecules are not available for use outside of the existing controlled trials for at least the next one to two years.

Enlarging her quality of life

Radio presenter Ann Ramsay aged 90 years, has been hosting her "Evensong" program on Sydney's 2MBSFM Fine Music Station for over 20 years.

Ann has MD and a conventional magnifying glass is no longer strong enough for reading with comfort or speed.

Ann is able to prepare her weekly programs with the assistance of her electronic low vision aid (or CCTV). Even with substantial vision loss, she is still able to independently read and write.

"I couldn't be without it, I use it every day" says Ann. She also uses the device for things like doing the crossword and checking prescriptions and medications.

Market Research Project

Alison, our Research Officer would like to thank everyone who has participated in our telephone survey to date. If we haven't called you yet, it probably won't be long! Your time is greatly appreciated.

Support for Low Vision

- Your state Blind Society will have a range of low vision devices on display. For example support aids to help you with a whole variety of tasks big and small such as reading, threading a needle and pouring a cup of tea.

You can also check with them for the availability of second hand electronic vision aids to purchase.

- Contact the Foundation or your State Blind Society for a support group located in your area.

- **Bigger Bolder Brighter rule**

Try to improve lighting, increase contrast, control glare, enlarge, label and mark. Small changes such as these will make a difference to many areas of daily life.

- Private companies such as Quantum Technology also provide low vision aids, call 02 8844 9888.

Ring us for a list of low vision resources in your state including your local Blind Society.



Ann using her ClearView magnifier

Eating for your eyes, remember...

Eat fish twice a week

Eat fresh fruit and vegetables

Eat nuts once or more each week

If you smoke, stop!

Cut right down on commercially baked or deep fried foods

Talk to your doctor or health care provider about diet and the possible role of supplements.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I suffer from watery or dry eyes - does this mean I have the wet or dry form of Macular Degeneration?

A: No. Your eye specialist can tell you if you have Wet or Dry MD. The front of the eye does not indicate what's happening at the back of the eye or visa versa. Symptoms such as bloodshot eyes, dry, itchy or watery eyes have no relationship with the macula which is at the back of the eye.

Learn more about MD!

An educational video is now available. It is titled 'Macular Degeneration - A Modern Epidemic'. The cost is \$35 including GST and postage. To order go to our website www.mdfoundation.com.au or call us on 1800 111 709.

Contact us

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Website: www.mdfoundation.com.au

Did you know?

Sweet Corn and Capsicum are in season.

They are packed with Lutein, an anti-oxidant essential for a healthy macula. Lutein increases the macula pigment; it is thought to protect against MD.

Q: Is a Macular Hole the same as Macular Degeneration?

A: No. They are separate and distinct conditions. However, as both affect the macular which is the centre of the retina, the visual symptoms can be alike. As we get older the vitreous gel which fills the eye tends to shrink causing traction and pulling on the retina. This can cause a Macular Hole. Macular Degeneration on the other hand is a progressive degenerative disease.

We need your help to continue our vital work

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.



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