



What's New in Ophthalmology Today?

Unique Treatment for Dry Macular Degeneration

“Age-Related Macular Degenerative, AMD, is a leading cause of vision loss in Americans age 60 and older. It is a disease that causes cells in the macula- the part of the eye that allows us to see in fine detail – to die. There are two forms... wet and dry AMD. Dry AMD occurs when the light-sensitive cells in the macula slowly break down, gradually blurring vision,” according to Eurekalert. Approximately 1 million Americans have Geographic Atrophy- the end stage of dry AMD and there is currently no help for it. The successful results of the phase 2 study using a unique treatment method to slow the progression of this disorder were recently reported by Dr. K. Zhang from the University of California – SD in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. A tiny capsule was filled with genetically engineered cells. These cells were programmed to produce a substance called **ciliary neurotrophic factor (CNTF)**. The capsule was placed in the back of the eye where it was able to secrete this factor for twelve months. In the group of patients receiving the high dose capsule “all but one of the patients...96%, maintained stabilized vision, compared to only 75% of the patients who received no factor. **Thus, long term treatment with CNTF helped to slow down the loss of vision in Dry AMD.**

Another interesting finding was reported this month-Women younger than 75 with Low vitamin D levels – defined as 38 nanometers – were at higher risk of developing AMD than those with vitamin D levels above 38. **“Blood concentrations above 38 were associated with at least a 44 percent decreased odds of having AMD”** according to the lead author Amy E. Millen, Ph.D. as reported in the April Archives of Ophthalmology. More work needs to be done but this is an important and useful finding.

Progress is being made in a disease that affects 9% of Americans over the age of 40. Good News.

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