

Macular Degeneration Awareness Week 2010

The Foundation was fortunate to have as a special guest the Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk, Queensland Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs, to launch MD Awareness Week on 23 May with her very personal story of MD. The launch in Kirribilli, Sydney, was attended by our wonderful and supportive Patron Ita Buttrose and our founding Director Dr Paul Beaumont, along with people from the MD community, sponsors, supporters and friends.

Our sincere thanks go to Novartis, Blackmores, Optometry Association Australia and Bluedesk for their ongoing support which enables the week to be held each year.

As part of this year's Awareness Week we commissioned a national Galaxy survey on MD symptom recognition. Results concluded that there is an alarming risk that people experiencing a symptom of MD will dismiss the symptom thinking they just need glasses or are experiencing computer related eye strain.

Thank You!

Thank you again for your ongoing support. As we draw quickly to the end of this financial year please be assured that all of your generous donations made before 30 June will be processed immediately to ensure receipt in the 2009/10 financial year for taxation purposes.

Julie Heraghty, Chief Executive Officer

Survey Results

Symptom recognition is low despite our massive growth in awareness of MD:

Only 13% of those surveyed were able to name a symptom of MD, like difficulty seeing faces, or straight lines appearing wavy or bent.

For the 'at risk' group (people 50 and over), experiencing a symptom of MD:

60% thought they just needed glasses. One in four (25%) dismissed a symptom as computer related eye strain.

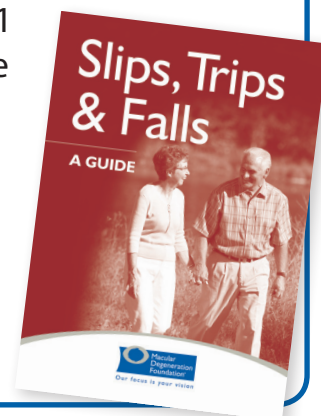
The Amsler Grid

Almost no one (5%) surveyed was aware of the Amsler Grid, which can be used daily to test for symptoms of MD.

You can order a free Amsler Grid from the Foundation.

New Publication

Slips, Trips & Falls – A Guide has now been published by the MD Foundation. Please call on 1800 111 709 to obtain your free copy of the booklet. We hope you will find it helpful. Our thanks to NSW Health for their valuable contributions.



Annastacia's Story

Annastacia Palaszcuk studied Arts/Law at University of Queensland and later entered politics and became the second female lawyer appointed to the Queensland Cabinet.

She is Queensland Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs, represents the electorate of Inala and likes reading, AFL, rugby league, theatre and sailing.

Annastacia was diagnosed with the wet form of MD when she was just 34 years of age.

She woke up one morning and noticed a black blurry dot in the centre of her right eye and she knew something was wrong and immediately went to her optometrist the same day. She was referred to an ophthalmologist, then diagnosed with wet MD and was undergoing treatment a couple of days later.

Annastacia's depth perception is affected and she has her speeches printed in large font and uses stronger lighting to help with reading.

The Minister told the MD Foundation that having MD has provided her with a greater awareness of the issues facing people who experience vision loss.

When she was diagnosed she went straight to the MD Foundation website to find out more information and learn about what was happening to her eyes.



Annastacia Palaszcuk,
Queensland Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs

"Early detection and immediate treatment was critical to saving my sight. Six years after being diagnosed my eye sight remains the same. I urge everyone to seek immediate medical attention if they experience any change in their vision."

The Minister conveyed her personal appreciation of the importance of patient support like the MD Foundation to assist people with disabilities.

Ms Palaszcuk said she was happy to share her story if it could help prevent someone from losing their vision.

We sincerely thank the Minister for sharing her story with the MD community in our newsletter. Launching MD awareness week in the media has helped to achieve the Foundation's vision to reduce the incidence and impact of MD in Australia.

DIARY NOTE: Education Sessions

New South Wales

Grafton: 3 June, 2-4pm

Casino: 4 June, 10am-12pm

Ballina: 4 June, 2-4pm

Burwood: 22 June, 10am-12pm

Rockdale: 24 June, 10am-12pm

Western Australia

Wanneroo: 24 June, 10am-12pm

Winthrop: 30 June, 10am-12pm

Northern Territory

Casuarina: 30 June, 10am-12pm

Alice Springs: early July
(details to be confirmed)

For more information on locations and to book call: 1800 111 709

Celebrating MD Awareness Week – Around Australia

The MD Foundation organised a number of special education events across Australia to celebrate MD Awareness Week. Our leading Ophthalmologists, working on behalf of the MD Foundation, spoke to hundreds of people across five states.

MD Awareness Week kicked off with a captivating presentation in Brisbane by Dr David Hilford.

Down south in Hobart, consulting Ophthalmologist at the Hobart Eye Clinic, and renowned specialist Dr Nitin Verma shared his knowledge on MD.

For the first time, Dr Jagjit Singh Gilhotra presented on behalf of the MD Foundation in Adelaide.

Across the country, leading Perth surgeon Dr Dimitri Yellachich shared his knowledge on MD.

An exciting and informative presentation on MD was made by our dedicated Patron Ita Buttrose, along with MD Foundation Director Dr Paul Beaumont to over 200 people in Sydney.

Thanks to all involved for their time and effort in making these events such a huge success!



Dr Beaumont and Ita Buttrose

Key messages - spread the word to your family and friends

- MD can affect those under 50
- Tell all your family members that you have MD
- Make family members aware of the hereditary factor (50% chance of developing MD)
- Make young people, especially any grandchildren, aware of the link between smoking and blindness - they may listen to granny!
- Make sure all your relatives phone the MD Foundation to get their free info kit
- Use your Amsler Grid and know the symptoms for MD
- Early detection is critical to saving sight
- If you experience any sudden change in vision you should see an optometrist or ophthalmologist urgently
- Any difficulty with vision should never be dismissed as just needing glasses, getting older or computer related eye strain
- Dismissing symptoms and not seeking advice risks blindness
- Nutrition and diet are important to risk reduction and to slow down the progression of the disease

Did you know?

Access to Aviation

The Australian Government has released the first ever White Paper 'Flight Path to the Future' regarding aviation policy and recognising the many difficulties faced by passengers with a disability. Airlines and airports will be encouraged to develop and publish Disability



Access Facilitation Plans to communicate information on the services available to passengers with disability, and how those services are best accessed.

National Companion Card

The National Companion Card Scheme is now fully operational in all States and Territories. The Card enables people with a permanent life-long disability, who require a carer to access community activities and events, to do so for the price of a single ticket.

To find out if you are eligible or for more information free call: 1800 893 044 or visit www.companioncard.gov.au

Roll-out of Accessible Voting

A legal framework for blind and vision impaired electors to cast a progressively independent and secret vote at the next three Federal elections has been passed. By September 2010, voters will be able to attend an AEC Divisional Office where they will be connected to a trained call centre operator to complete ballot papers on their behalf. The 2013 election will implement a telephone keypad interface to be used for voting, and in 2016 voting will be available from any telephone in Australia for pre-registered electors.

Put on your Running Shoes

Love walking or running and want to make a difference?

Join the Blackmores Sydney Running Festival on September 19 and register to raise much appreciated funds for the MD Foundation.

To register visit:

www.sydneyrunningfestival.com.au

Tell your family and friends to join in and enter as a group.

End of Financial Year Appeal

Thank you for supporting us here at the Foundation. As a charitable organisation, we rely on your generous donations, bequests and sponsorship to service the MD community across Australia. If you are able to help us at this time, a donation slip and reply paid envelope is included for your convenience. You can also make a donation online using your credit card at www.md.foundation.com.au

All donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible

We thank all our wonderful friends for your ongoing support

Contact us

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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. May 2010