



TGA Approval for Lucentis

The MD Foundation welcomed the announcement on Thursday 1 March 2007 that Lucentis has been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

Lucentis is administered by injection into the affected eye. It works by blocking uncontrolled formation, growth and leakage of new blood vessels under the retina that lead to the development of 'wet' MD and subsequent vision loss.

In January 2006 the Foundation wrote to the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Tony Abbott, stating: "It is critical that the significance of ranibizumab (Lucentis) be flagged with the Government and that processes are put in place now to ensure that patients have access to this treatment quickly."

Dr. Paul Beaumont appeared on behalf of the MD Foundation on the ABC 7.30 Report on 4 September 2006 to again emphasise the importance not only of TGA registration of the drug, but also Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listing. Minister Abbott indicated that the drug would be subsidised within six months.

The Foundation will continue to make representations on your behalf to the Federal Government to list this treatment on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT: Use your Amsler Grid daily and always report any changes in your vision to your eye specialist

Smoking and Blindness

The Macular Degeneration Foundation recently welcomed the second set of warnings to be printed on tobacco products across Australia. Of the seven new messages printed on tobacco products, 'Smoking Causes Blindness' is one of the most vital as smoking greatly increases the chances of developing MD.

The Foundation issued a press release highlighting the link between smoking and MD.

Smoking is the only modifiable risk factor for Macular Degeneration. You can't change your family, you can't change your age, but you can stop smoking.

If you have relatives, especially children or grandchildren who smoke, please talk to them about the link between smoking and MD. Encourage them to seek help and quit smoking today.

**To stop smoking, call
Quitline
131 848**



Navigator Library Access Project (NLAP) An Exciting New Program

Thanks to the generous support of the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and the Profield Foundation, a unique Client Services project is being undertaken in NSW called the Navigator Library Access Project (NLAP).

The project is designed to help those who have difficulty reading, due to Macular Degeneration, have access to new audio technology - the Navigator.

The Navigator is an easy-to-use, hand-held portable device that reads books, magazines and newspapers aloud. The Foundation will provide the Navigator for our clients through the local library.

The Library will provide the ongoing service of loading books, magazines and

newspapers onto the Navigator. The program will be delivered either through the home-delivery service or via the usual "walk-in" service.

If you have some difficulty in reading and live in NSW, then you are eligible to submit an expression of interest to participate in the project. An Expression of Interest form for NSW readers has been included with this newsletter.

Please note: Those who have already been approached by the Foundation and completed an expression of interest form are **not** required to complete another form.

For more information, please contact Anne-Marie Taylor at the Foundation on 1800 111 709.



MD Awareness Week 25th June - 1st July 2007

Macular Degeneration Awareness Week will be held from Monday 25 June – Sunday 1 July 2007. Once again the Foundation thanks our supporters Blackmores, Novartis Ophthalmics and the Optometrist Association Australia. This year the Foundation has formed a partnership with the National Returned Services League (RSL) to focus on veteran communities. The Foundation is grateful for the support of Major General Bill Crews AO (Retd), National President of the RSL, who is keen to raise awareness of Macular Degeneration within the veteran community.

Annual Fundraising Dinner

This year the Annual Fundraising Dinner will be held on Friday 29 June 2007 at the Shrangri-la Hotel, Sydney. It will be the highlight of the MD Awareness Week. Tickets will be available from the Foundation by phoning 1800 111 709 the week beginning Monday, 15 May 2007.

LET EVERYONE KNOW!

During MD Awareness Week, you can help spread the word by writing a letter to the editor of your local paper. The key messages to deliver are: to make sure the macula is checked and to use the Amsler Grid daily.

Coping Strategies

Often after diagnosis it takes time to adjust to new circumstances. What may seem like an insurmountable difficulty for someone newly experiencing vision loss can become just another element of daily life with some slight adjustments to everyday activities. Some people find it difficult adjusting, while others incorporate changes in their everyday activities with minimal disruption to their quality of life.

If you are newly diagnosed:

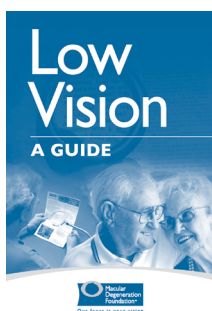
- Talk through your diagnosis with friends and family
- Keep active
- Learn new skills and adapt old ones to new circumstances
- Give friends hints about how they can be of practical assistance
- Maintain existing social activities and seek support from peers and friends
- Link with peer support groups

Adopting coping strategies to help overcome the challenges of low vision is a worthwhile pathway to consider. These strategies include:

- Staying positive and setting realistic goals
- Adjusting and learning new skills and feeling empowered through accomplishment
- Keeping things in perspective
- Accepting limitations and not being too demanding of oneself
- Actively seeking support from others
- Adopting a 'can do' attitude

"One of the most difficult things about being diagnosed was the uncertainty. How much vision would I lose and how long would it take? I made some decisions about life and work that were probably more reactive than positive. Since then I think I've learnt that I'm in control. I'm vision-impaired, not life-impaired."

- A patient with MD



Low Vision - A Guide

Low Vision – A Guide (3rd Edition) is a publication produced by the MD Foundation. The booklet provides general information on low vision, advice for

the newly diagnosed, coping strategies, a helpful directory of services, contact details of major organisations and providers of adaptive technology and low vision tips. For your free copy, call the Foundation on our freecall number, **1800 111 709**.

Did You Know?

The Foundation can provide you with publications on MD for distribution at your local club or community organisation. Please contact the Foundation for details.



CAPSICUM IS NOW IN SEASON!

Vegetables and fresh fruit that are high in Lutein are great for your eyes. Eat dark green leafy vegetables like spinach, as well as fresh fruit daily to keep your eyes healthy.

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Volunteering

If you would like to become a volunteer and help in our Sydney office, please phone the Foundation on 1800 111 709. The MD Foundation thanks all volunteers who give their time to help the Foundation service the needs of the MD community throughout Australia.

Donate to the Foundation

As a charity, the MD Foundation relies on donations, bequests and sponsorship to fund its operations. A donation slip and reply paid envelope is included with this newsletter for your convenience.

An easier and quicker option is available by calling the Foundation to make a credit card donation. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

The MD Foundation would like to say a big thank you to all who have donated so far in 2007.

Q: Can I hurt my eyes by using them?

A: No. Sitting close to the television or reading small print will not make your MD worse. However, take regular breaks to avoid tiredness and eye strain.

Education

Our education sessions are happening throughout Australia.

South Australia

16 - 20 April 2007

NSW - Southern Highlands

16 - 20 April 2007

VIC - Melbourne

3 - 4 May 2007

North Queensland

21 - 26 May 2007

NSW - North Coast

May 2007

Western Australia

June 2007

NSW - North West

June 2007

Invitations will be sent to members and Health Care Professionals closer to the date.

Come Along to Education Days!

Please encourage all of your friends, relatives and community representatives to attend our education sessions. RSVP to sessions on 1800 111 709.

Something Fishy...

Fish is a great source of Omega 3 and is good for your eyes whether it is fresh, tinned or frozen! Try salmon, tuna or sardines for a healthy meal.

