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Behind Your Eyes

For the Patients & Friends of
Eye to Eye Ophthalmology

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HOW MACULAR DEGENERATION IMPACTS THE ELDERLY

Macular degeneration is the leading cause of low vision in this country. Low vision is defined as uncorrectable vision worse than 20/40 in the better seeing eye. This is also the cutoff for an unrestricted Pennsylvania driver's license. Macular degeneration affects 2 million Americans, most of them over 65. The disease has a definite impact on quality of life for those afflicted and their families.

Those who have low vision from this disease are at a 2x greater risk of falling, a 4x greater risk of getting a hip fracture, and 3x greater risk of depression than their peers. They are also admitted to a nursing home 3 years earlier. The visually impaired are also at risk for medication errors due to trouble reading labels on the bottles and seeing the pills. They are at risk financially as well due to trouble writing their checks, reading the bills and balancing the books.

Do not despair, though. There are many things to do to help those with low vision from this condition. First, they can get their family to help when possible. Have them arrange and organize their house so they can find things easier and get falling/tripping hazards out of the way. If they have one set spot for house keys, for example, it is much easier to find them when they have trouble seeing. They can also arrange their clothes so that dark blue items are in a separate place from black items. One can increase contrast in their environment, like using a white cup for coffee.

Other things to do are to increase magnification and improve lighting. Large button phones, large print books and magazines, and large print checks (see your bank) are available. You can borrow large print books or books on tape from the U.S. National Library Service (<http://www.loc.gov/nls>) 800-424-8567. You can buy hand held or stand magnifiers with a light built in (www.lighthouse.org). Also, optimizing your glasses helps a lot. Getting that extra little bit of clarity can make a big difference. Buy a goose neck lamp with a bright halogen bulb to hold over your work. They also make talking clocks and watches.

There are many resources available to those with macular degeneration. An important person to see is a low vision specialist. They are a specially trained optometrist that will evaluate your needs for activities in your life and get you the special gadgets you need. This evaluation is covered under Medicare, although the gadgets are not. Dr. Luscavage can give you the names of some specialists in the area or you can go to www.lighthouse.org. There are macular degeneration support groups like Association for Macular Diseases (www.macula.org, 212-605-3719) or Macular Degeneration Partnership (www.amd.org, 888-430-9898). There are local and state agencies for the blind and visually impaired that can give you social support and assistance as well. For clinical information and the latest research, the American Academy of Ophthalmology has a website filled with useful information (www.aoa.org/smartsight). This is where most of the facts in this article were from. If you have macular degeneration or have a family member who does, please contact Dr. Luscavage so she can help.

EYE TO EYE SPOTLIGHT

STAFF PICKS

We have a new feature for our newsletter. We want to share with you some of our favorite things so you can see how much you have in common with us...

FAVORITE TV SHOWS

Dr. Luscavage – “Lost” and “American Idol”

Joanne (head technician) – “The Office” and “NCIS”

Peg (front desk manager) – “CSI” all of them, “Law and Order”

Rebecca (receptionist) – “Law and Order”

FAVORITE MOVIES

Dr. Luscavage – “Airplane”, “Back to the Future”

Joanne – “Happy Gilmore”, “Blades of Glory”

Peg – “Pretty Woman”, “Enemy Mine”, “Dirty Dancing”

Rebecca – “Lethal Weapon I, II and III”

FAVORITE AUTHORS

Dr. Luscavage – David Sedaris, Sue Grafton

Joanne – James Patterson

Peg – Any Science Fiction

Rebecca – Mary Higgins Clark, Dean Koonz

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DR. LUSCAVAGE IN THE NEWS!

Congratulations to Lonnie Luscavage, MD. She was recognized by "Main Line Today" magazine as one of the area's top doctors of 2009! Please read all about it on the website www.MainLineToday.com and type in "Top Doctors."

Dr. Luscavage will be a guest on the radio show "Aging with Grace" with Patricia Grace. This is a podcast (www.blogtalkradio.com/patricia-grace) servicing the United States and Canada. She will be talking about how macular degeneration impacts the elderly with Ms. Grace on Monday, March 22nd at 6:30 PM. Please tune in! The main article of this newsletter will be featured on her website www.agingwithgrace.net as well.

Lonnie was also a judge at the 2010 Lucy Balian Rorke Fair on March 2nd. This was a science fair for all Chester County schools grades 6-12.

**Important Phone Numbers &
Resources**

Eye to Eye Ophthalmology

610-388-9755

Eye to Eye Fax

610-388-9756

Riddle Memorial Hospital

610-566-9400

Wills Eye Hospital

215-928-3000

Behind Your Eyes is a production of Eye to Eye Ophthalmology. Comments or suggestion can be addressed to Joe Luscavage at 610-613-9887 or email Eyetoeyeop@aol.com