

Senior Health News

New Treatment To Help Seniors Preserve Their Sight

(NAPSA)—Scientists focused on treating the leading cause of blindness in seniors have made an important breakthrough.

An eye disease called neovascular, or wet, age-related macular degeneration (AMD) affects more than one million seniors and causes more older Americans to lose their sight than any other condition. Each year, 200,000 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with neovascular AMD, and the population at risk for blindness caused by AMD is growing fast since baby-boomers are aging and people are living longer. By the year 2030, neovascular AMD could rob 500,000 people of their sight each year. Fortunately, there is a new treatment to help fight this disease.

Macugen® (pegaptanib sodium injection), an intravitreal injection, is now available for the treatment of all forms of neovascular AMD. Until now, treatments were available for only about 25 percent of people with the condition, leaving hundreds of thousands without a treatment option. Clinical studies show that Macugen may help preserve vision.

“Macugen is a revolutionary, breakthrough treatment for neovascular (wet) AMD. Neovascular AMD can lead to a rapid loss of central vision that impairs activities such as recognizing faces, reading, driving a car, crossing streets and basic tasks,” said Donald J. D’Amico, M.D., Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary and professor of ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School. “So helping to preserve vision could make a significant difference to patients.”



Photo: Nation Eye Institute

Doctors say there is a new way to treat the leading cause of blindness in seniors.

Neovascular AMD is caused by abnormal blood vessels leaking blood and fluid into the part of the eye called the retina. That leakage damages the retina and eventually destroys central vision. However, most patients can still see peripherally, or “out of the corner of their eye.” The new drug, which is made by Pfizer and Eyetech, works by targeting a type of protein called vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), which scientists believe is an underlying cause of neovascular AMD. Although uncommon, sometimes serious eye infection can develop. Therefore, patients with eye infections should not be treated with Macugen.

The most common symptoms of neovascular AMD is a central blurred or black spot, distortion of objects or simply blurred vision. If you experience a change in vision, see an eye doctor immediately. The earlier treatment begins, the better the outcome tends to be. For more information on neovascular AMD, talk to your health care provider.

For more information on Macugen, visit the Web site at www.macugen.com.