



Retina Consultants
of Southwest Florida®

Fort Myers
6901 International Center Blvd.
Ft. Myers, FL 33912
(239) 939-4323

Other Office Locations
Cape Coral
106 Del Prado Blvd., S.
Cape Coral, FL 33990
(239) 772-4323

Naples
2335 Tamiami Tr., N., Suite 209
Naples, FL 34103
(239) 263-3337

Port Charlotte
2525 Harbor Blvd., Suite 302
Port Charlotte, FL 33952
(941) 627-4422

website: www.eye.md

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Eye Openers



Retina Consultants
of Southwest Florida®



RETINA CONSULTANTS' PHYSICIANS:

(back row) Dr. Paul A. Raskauskas, Dr. Tom Ghuman
(front row) Dr. Donald C. Fletcher, Dr. Joseph P. Walker,
Dr. Glenn L. Wing

Lucentis Approved by FDA for Macular Degeneration



Dr. Paul A. Raskauskas

The most promising treatment for wet macular degeneration received approval for public use by the US Food and Drug Administration.

In June, the FDA allowed Lucentis®, made by Genentech, to be administered to patients nationwide. Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida, in conjunction with the National Ophthalmic Research Institute, participated in the clinical trials for Lucentis. They spent three years investigating the drug and its effects on patients with the wet form of AMD.

"This is a very exciting new treatment," said Dr. Paul Raskauskas of Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida. "We now have a medicine that we can inject into the eye which can do the same work as a laser without the damaging side effects."

In wet AMD, new blood vessels may begin

to grow and leak fluid in the eye. Lucentis works by blocking the protein responsible for growing abnormal blood vessels, essentially cutting off the supply of fluid and blood to them. In clinical trials, 90 percent of patients maintained or improved their vision compared with 53 percent of patients who were in the control group.

Studies also show that Lucentis has the ability to **improve** vision in some patients. In the studies, 59 percent of the patients treated with Lucentis improved vision with a gain of 15 letters or more on an eye chart.

Since its approval, Lucentis has been used on hundreds of patients with good results. This medication is used only for the wet form of macular degeneration. Your retina specialist will determine if you are a candidate for this treatment.

Lucentis Approved

MACUGEN:

Not Only for Macular Degeneration?

Macugen, the first FDA approved anti-VEGF treatment for the wet form of age related macular degeneration, may have some other beneficial and potentially vision saving uses.

Two new studies show that Macugen has beneficial effects as a treatment for diabetic retinopathy and macular edema after central vein occlusion. The studies were presented at the American Society of Retinal Specialists and European Vitreoretinal Society Congress in Cannes, France in September.

Researchers found that patients who received Macugen displayed better visual outcomes than those who received a placebo injection. Studies

are ongoing to determine whether Macugen could be used as a main treatment option for diabetic retinopathy and/or macular edema.

Another drug in development for diabetic retinopathy has just received word from the US Food and Drug Administration that at least three more years of testing needs to be performed to determine its efficacy.

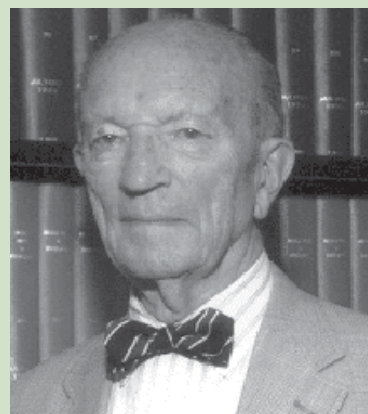
The FDA has asked pharmaceutical maker Eli Lilly to perform an additional three year investigation on Arxxant®. Eli Lilly says it may take up to five years for such a study to be complete. Now, the drug maker is weighing the options for further development of Arxxant.

In clinical trials, Arxxant significantly reduced the occurrence of sustained moderate vision loss in patients being treated for moderate to very severe diabetic retinopathy. Right now, laser therapy, steroid injections and vitrectomies are they only options for treatment.

The physicians at Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida expressed disappointment that Arxxant will not be released soon. They are paying close attention to these developments and will be sure to inform patients if any of these drugs become available for use on diabetic retinopathy and/or macular edema.

"If you live long enough, you get everything you want!" – Charles Schepens, MD (1912-2006)

Retinal Pioneer Dies



Dr. Charles L. Schepens, MD

Recognized as the father of modern retinal surgery, Charles L. Schepens, M.D., founder of The Schepens Eye Research Institute, died earlier this year from a severe stroke.

The 94 year old was a practicing physician and surgeon, a clinical investigator, a surgical innovator, an author and the teacher of many of the world's retina specialists.

"Dr. Charles Schepens had a tremendous positive impact on my life and the life of my family," said Dr. Glenn L. Wing of Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida. "He was a great physician and an excellent teacher in the field of vitreous reti-

nal diseases. He was gracious and always a gentleman. He was generous with his time with his patients and his students."

Charles Schepens was born in 1912 in Belgium. His first passion was mathematics until he became interested in ophthalmic instrumentation. He received his medical degree in 1935 and just five years later he joined the Belgian Air Force and the French Resistance as a medical officer during World War II. Schepens was captured twice by the Gestapo but survived to immigrate to the United States in 1947.

Shortly thereafter, Dr. Schepens established and became the first Director of the Retina Service at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, the first such service of its kind.

In 1950, Dr. Schepens founded the Retina Foundation, now known as the Schepens Eye Research Institute (SERI), an affiliate of Harvard Medical School. SERI is the largest independent eye research organization in the U.S.

Dr. Schepens invented the indirect binocular

ophthalmoscope, which is routinely used today to view the retina. His devices and surgical techniques, such as scleral buckling, have been credited with raising the success rate of retinal reattachment surgery from 40 percent to 90 percent.

"He has touched professionally in one way or another all retina surgeons who are practicing today," said Dr. Wing.

All of the doctors of Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida are affiliated with the Schepens Eye Research Institute as adjunct clinical scientists and have been trained using the techniques developed by Dr. Schepens.

"It has been an honor throughout my life to have known Dr. Schepens," concluded Dr. Wing.



Dr. Glenn L. Wing

Save the Date

11th Annual Eye & Vision Research Symposia Showcases

Latest Breakthroughs in Eye Exploration and Macular Degeneration

Mark your calendars. Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida is preparing for its 11th year of teaming up with scientists from The Schepens Eye Research Institute (SERI), an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, for the latest in eye and vision research.

"This year, we will address a wide range of research techniques including retinal regeneration and transplantation methods," said Dr. Joseph P. Walker of Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida. "Research is the foundation from which we are able to produce new drugs and treatments for diseases like macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy. It is very important that our patients are aware of what new treatments are available right now and in the future. It gives hope to the patient as well as the physician," Dr. Walker said.

Some of those new treatments include Lucentis and the VEGF Trap for the wet form of macular degeneration as well as Arxxant for diabetic retinopathy.

"Without diligent research many drugs would not have become available for use," said Dr. Walker. "We as physicians, benefit from clinical research because we perform the treatments and have an intimate understanding of how they work."

Michael S. Gilmore, President of The Schepens Eye Research Institute will also address current

research. SERI's progress with animal stem cell research and regeneration will be one of the highlights of his presentation.

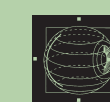
This year, as in years past, Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida will host two free symposia events. Both will address all the new findings in current and future treatments as well as introduce you to new and exciting ideas that

scientists are currently working on. Plus, before and after each event, you will have the chance to meet with low vision specialists and device vendors from around the state of Florida as well as community organizations that specialize with vision loss.

The toll-free telephone number for registration will be listed in our next newsletter.

11TH ANNUAL EYE & VISION RESEARCH SYMPOSIA

Presented by:
Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida



**THE SCHEPENS EYE
RESEARCH INSTITUTE**
an Affiliate of Harvard Medical School



The National Ophthalmic Research Institute (NORI)

Friday, February 23, 2007

Harborside Event Center • 1375 Monroe Street, Fort Myers
9 am: Registration & Coffee
10:00 – 11:30 am: Symposia

Saturday, February 24, 2007

The Philharmonic Center for the Arts • 5833 Pelican Bay Blvd., Naples
8 am: Registration & Coffee
9:00 – 10:30 am: Symposia

Prevention is Key to AMD



Dr. Tom Ghuman

There is no cure for Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD). But one can help protect central vision from AMD by maintaining a healthy lifestyle of exercise and a diet rich in vitamins and minerals.

Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida is proud to announce our relationship with a new supplement called Ocuprin®. Ocuprin is a dietary supplement rich in vitamins and minerals proven to be clinically effective in reducing the risk of macular degeneration in some people.

"Ocuprin contains the active ingredients tested in three national vitamin studies," said Dr. Tom Ghuman of Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida. "Those studies include the Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS), the Veterans Lutein Antioxidant Supplementation Trial (LAST) and the Johns Hopkins 7-year clinical trial of Vitamin E. These studies tested the type and dosage amounts of Vitamins A, C, E,



Zinc, Copper and Lutein and their ability to prevent or decrease the effects of AMD."

Retina Consultants' physicians routinely recommend patients take multiple vitamin supplements to reduce the risk of AMD. Now, patients can get all the recommended doses in just one pill, Ocuprin.

"Ocuprin also helps further the science behind preventing macular degeneration," said Dr. Ghuman. "From each bottle of Ocuprin sold by Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida, 100 percent of the profits will go to fund macular degeneration research studies at the National Ophthalmic Research Institute (NORI) based at Retina Consultants' Fort Myers Headquarters."

For three years, NORI has been involved in the latest research in treatment for macular degeneration. NORI has been the clinical testing site for several of the latest treatments such as Macugen, Lucentis and Photodynamic Therapy.

Ocuprin is only available through a physician or eye care professional. No eye exam is needed, but you do need to sign up for the subscription program. This will allow you to receive a 30 day supply of Ocuprin each month, delivered to your home without having to call to re-order. Please see a Retina Consultants staff member for subscription forms. Always consult your family physician before beginning any vitamins/mineral regimen.

Benefits of Ocuprin

- 1. Healthy Living:** Ocuprin allows you to safely add the beneficial effects of adding vitamins and minerals to your daily diet to help reduce the risk of macular degeneration, as well as other diseases.
- 2. Proven:** These vitamins are clinically proven by major national studies to be effective.
- 3. Safe:** Taking numerous different vitamin supplements can be dangerous due to overdosing. Ocuprin has carefully measured doses safe for daily consumption. You should always consult your family physician before beginning any vitamin/mineral regimen.
- 4. Convenience:** Each month, the supplements are delivered to your home and your account is automatically billed. You never have to worry about re-ordering!
- 5. Cost:** In order to get the maximum effectiveness of vitamin supplements like those in Ocuprin, you could spend hundreds of dollars a month. Ocuprin has all the supplements you need in one pill for one low cost of \$19.95 per bottle.

Retina Consultants Nurse Wins Prestigious Award

Recently, one of Retina Consultants' staff members, Eileen Knips, RN, was honored with a prestigious award. Eileen was one of four winners of The News-Press "Nurse of Excellence Award".

Eileen was nominated by several of her peers at Retina Consultants for her dedication, hard work and good nature. Her profile appeared in a special section of The News-Press in May.

Eileen is one of the Clinical Research Coordinators at Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida and the National Ophthalmic Research Institute (NORI). She arranges for clinical studies to take place at NORI on patients referred by the doctors of Retina Consultants.

After spending more than 20 years as a nurse, Eileen says she still loves the profession for one reason: "Every day, nurses have the opportunity to make a significant impact on someone's life."



Eileen Knips, RN

News From NORI

National Ophthalmic Research Institute®

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with neovascular Age Related Macular Degeneration (wet AMD), you should know about a new clinical study currently enrolling patients.

The National Ophthalmic Research Institute (NORI) is participating in a study of VEGF Trap for wet AMD. This treatment is designed to block the proteins believed to cause the vision loss associated with your condition. VEGF Trap has not yet been approved by the FDA.

- Through participation, you can expect to receive:
- No cost study related treatment for your condition
 - No cost study related eye exams

For more information, or to determine if you qualify for this study, please call NORI at 239-938-1284.



Links to AMD Uncovered



Dr. Joseph P. Walker

Eat healthy, exercise and stop smoking. Those are the three main components of a healthier lifestyle. Now we know that keeping your weight down and your lungs clear will help save your vision.

Researchers at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary studied how smoking, body mass and genetics are linked to age-related macular degeneration (AMD). They studied DNA samples from a group of 854 patients. Of that group, 574 had advanced AMD.

Results show there was a significant interaction between a common gene and the patients' body mass index (BMI). Scientists note that both the genetics and the BMI independently show an increased chance of developing AMD.

Cigarette smoking is also strongly linked with an increase risk of developing AMD. For patients who smoke, have a high BMI (of 30 or higher) and have a genetic tendency for AMD, they are six times more likely to develop significant macula degeneration.

"It is important to note that each of us has the ability to help keep our risk factors low," said Dr. Joseph Walker of Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida. "Although our genes will never change, we can maintain a healthy lifestyle by watching weight and not smoking. There is no medicine as successful as preventative maintenance."

Patients Help Each Other at Low Vision Support Groups

Since December 2005, Retina Consultants has hosted Low Vision/Macular Degeneration Support Group meetings at their four offices. These meetings offer an opportunity for patients living with low vision to learn new things from their peers and to pose questions to Retina Consultants' Occupational Therapist, Linda Goodwin.

"Patients who attend these meetings learn they are not alone and that help is out there as long as they are willing to look or ask for it," said Linda Goodwin, OTR/L. "This is a good way for patients not only to learn, but more importantly, to support each other."

Support group attendees have learned a plethora of new information including what special assistance is available to them through their local and state governments, new ways to make the most of their remaining vision, and ways to cope with loved ones living with low vision. In many cases, patients who live with low vision find it difficult to ask for help.

"There are so many people in this world, who if you tell them, will help you," said Susanna

Hausman, a Cape Coral support group member.

The support group meetings are offered once a month and the office locations are rotated. The dates are posted in our Eye Openers Newsletter and a staff member calls participants with a friendly meeting reminder.

After hearing about the groups already established, one patient has decided to start a support group closer to his home on Sanibel Island. Ralph Maffei would like to get a group together on the island.

"It is difficult for people to travel from Sanibel to Fort Myers," said Mr. Maffei. "I want to make it easier and start a group myself."

If you would like to join the Sanibel Island Support Group, please call our office at (239) 938-1281 to find out how to contact Mr. Maffei.

"We encourage everyone who either has low vision or lives with someone with low vision to attend one of our group meetings," said Linda Goodwin. "You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Who knows, you may even meet some new friends!"

Figuring Your Body Mass Index

A few months ago, we showed you how to calculate your BMI. With this latest news, we thought it was important to show you again.

Body mass index is calculated using a simple math equation:

$$\text{BMI} = \left(\frac{\text{Weight in Pounds}}{(\text{Height in inches}) \times (\text{Height in inches})} \right) \times 703$$

First, multiply your height in inches by your height in inches. Take that sum and divide it by your weight in pounds. Take that number and multiply it by 703 to give you your BMI. Here is an example: A woman who stands 5'6" (66 inches) and weighs 125 pounds has a Body Mass Index of 20.173.

$$\text{BMI} \quad \frac{(125 \text{ weight in pounds})}{(20.173) = 66 (\text{height in inches}) \times 66 (\text{height in inches}) \times 703}$$

From the BMI guideline key, we can determine that she is of normal weight. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute have outlined this guideline to BMI.

Normal:	18.5 to 24.9
Overweight:	25 to 29.9
Obese:	30 to 39.9
Extremely Obese:	above 40

Comments Please

You may have noticed that Retina Consultants has discontinued giving out Quality of Care surveys to each patient at each visit. Enough patient information has been gathered thanks to your honest opinions. Periodically, we will conduct full page surveys which we would still appreciate your input.

In the meantime, we still want to hear from you. In each of our four offices, there is a small black comment box near check-out where you can submit a comment, suggestion or just a kind word. Please take the time to fill out a card and drop it in our comment box. Each month, we will select one name from the boxes who will receive a gift certificate for dinner for two to an area restaurant. In order to be entered into the drawing, you must fill out a card and legibly print your name and date. This information is kept confidential and we will contact you via telephone if you are the winner.

Low Vision Support Group Meeting Dates

Port Charlotte:	October 23	• 10 am
Fort Myers:	November 13	• 10 am
Naples:	December 7	• 10 am
Cape Coral:	January 8	• 1:30pm

All meetings will be held at Retina Consultants' offices in their respective cities. If you are interested in attending, please call (239) 938-1200 extension 683.