

Fall 2007

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

12th ANNUAL Eye & Vision Research Symposia Dates Announced

Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida is proud to announce the dates and locations of their 12th Annual Eye & Vision Research Symposia.

This once a year event brings together three major organizations focused on revolutionary research and treatment of eye and vision threatening problems such as macular degeneration.

Physicians from Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida will discuss the latest treatments currently available to patients including new findings on combination therapies. They will also discuss the current US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) clinical trials they are involved in conjunction with the National Ophthalmic Research Institute (NORI).

This year, symposia attendees will learn about the cutting edge research taking place in Boston at The Schepens Eye Research Institute (SERI), an affiliate of Harvard Medical School. SERI scientists will discuss research projects including stem cell research and regenerative medicines. A virtual guided tour of the state-of-the-art headquarters of SERI will provide an insiders look at the nation's largest independent eye research facility.

Low vision aides for people with reduced vision will be available for evaluations. There will be demonstrations of the latest technology to assist the visually impaired. Government and community groups will be present to answer questions about the services provided to the visually impaired.

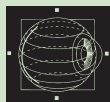
Space is limited at this highly informative and free event. Be sure to register early.

12th Annual EYE & VISION RESEARCH SYMPOSIA

Sponsored by:



Retina Consultants
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EYE RESEARCH
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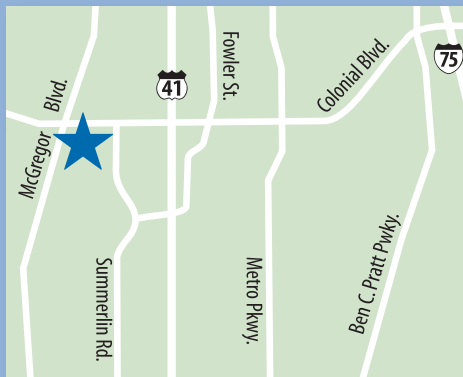
Friday, January 18, 2008

Registration: 9 am

Program: 10 – 11:30am

Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre
1380 Colonial Blvd.
Fort Myers

In the Royal Palm Plaza located on the corner of Colonial Blvd. and Summerlin Rd.



Saturday, January 19, 2008

Registration: 9 am

Program: 10-11:30am

Hilton Naples
5111 Tamiami Trail North
Naples

Located on Tamiami Trail (US 41) just south of the Pine Ridge Road Intersection



Car pooling is highly encouraged in Naples as parking is limited.

Curing Blindness with Stem Cells



Dr. Glenn L. Wing

Five years from now, patients with incurable eye diseases may be able to see again. At least, that is the hope of some British scientists studying the use of embryonic stem cells.

The *London Project to Cure AMD* began in June and it focuses on repairing the damage done to the retina from Age-Related Macular Degeneration with stem cells from human embryos. Embryonic stem cells carry all of the necessary information for the body to develop organs and tissues. The practice of using embryonic stem cells for the treatment of various diseases is highly controversial. In the United States, limited stem cell research is supported by federally funded research projects. However, because the practice is encouraged in Britain, the London Project received an eight million dollar donation by an anonymous U.S. donor, who project leaders say is frustrated with the prevention of stem cell studies in the United States.

"We are making great strides in treating patients with wet macular degeneration with the use of new medications for eye injections," said Dr. Glenn L. Wing of Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida. "These new drugs took years to develop, test and to be finally ready to treat patients. But we are still lacking a treatment for the millions

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Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida participates in the American Academy of Ophthalmology "EyeSmart" Campaign



Dr. Joseph P. Walker

40. Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida is proud to be one of the representatives in southwest Florida to spread the word about the campaign.

Recently, the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) unveiled its new campaign to spread awareness about numerous eye diseases and importance of eye examinations, especially for those people over the age of

Featured on local television station, NBC2/WBBH-TV, Dr. Joseph Walker explained the importance of eye screenings.

"It is so important for Americans to take charge of their eye health. If left untreated, eye diseases have the potential to lead to serious vision loss or blindness," said Dr. Walker. "It is just common sense to have your eyes checked to maintain overall good eye health."

According to the AAO, by the year 2020, 43 million Americans will face significant vision loss or blindness from age-related eye diseases. The vast majority of Americans don't think they are at risk for developing eye disease and most don't know the risk factors associated with the diseases. These include diseases such as age-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, cataracts, dry eye and glaucoma. Doctors are most

concerned about these diseases in the large number of Americans in the "Baby Boomer" generation.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends:

- Adults with no risk factors should get a baseline eye disease screening at the age of 40, the time when early signs of disease and changes in vision may start to occur.
- Adults should have follow-up screenings at regular prescribed intervals.
- People with symptoms, a family history or factors for eye disease, need an initial eye examination to determine how often they need to have follow-up examinations.
- These new recommendations don't replace regular visits to the optometrist or ophthalmologist to treat ongoing disease or injuries, or vision examinations for eye glasses or contact lenses.

EyeSmart Campaign



Retina Consultants Employee Debbie Ciampaglia and patient Alice Swanson are filmed for FOX 4 TV

Retina Consultants Makes Television Debut

Retina Consultants has teamed up with FOX 4 Television to participate in a TV/internet segment they call "Health Now".

The 30 second segments will be seen on FOX 4 periodically through the day. The segments will ask you to visit their website which contains more information about Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida including an eight minute educational video about the practice, its physicians, and the eye conditions that are treated.

The focus of the video segments is to inform viewers of the numerous eye diseases that a large population of people living in Southwest Florida have such as macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy and macular edema. It allows viewers to have a better understanding of eye diseases and what to do in case there is a loss in vision.

If you would like to watch the educational video, log on to www.fox4now.com and click on the Health Now icon on the right hand side of the page.

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Curing Blindness with Stem Cells

of people with dry macular degeneration. We must continue the research into stem cell treatments. It is imperative to continue learning about the benefits that these cells potentially hold."

According to The London Project, the new procedure will regenerate retinal pigment epithelial (RPE) cells in a lab. A surgeon will implant these cells into the back of the eye. Once researchers receive positive test results from their clinical trials, they are hoping the procedure will become as routine as cataract surgery.

"Before patients get their hopes up about this procedure, it is important to note that these clinical trials are taking place in Britain and will take years to develop," said Dr. Wing. "Unfortunately, it will be quite some time before we will see this procedure becoming routine, if at all."

Retina Consultants Doctors Named Top Doctors on the Gulfshore

Two of Retina Consultants physicians are named Gulfshore Life Magazine's "Top Doctors of 2007".

Joseph P. Walker, MD and Paul A. Raskauskas, MD received the honor in the June edition of the Naples-based magazine.

"This is a very special recognition for us because the nominations came from our peers," said Dr. Walker.

Southwest Florida's Top Doctors are selected by Gulfshore Life Magazine after extensive research by their partner, Castle Connolly Medical, the nation's leading provider of information on physicians. A national survey of physicians and hospital administrators is conducted by Castle Connolly Medical in order to obtain a list of the Top Doctors. This list is then narrowed by determining if the doctors have met the strict criteria of board certifications, number of years of unsupervised experience in practice and a clean disciplinary record.

"Gulfshore Life's readers are fortunate to be in a region of the country with many excellent doctors and hospitals, but many people will still have difficulty in selecting a physician," said William Liss-Levinson, vice president and chief strategy & operations officer for Castle Connolly*.

Liss-Levinson also points out that because of the widespread advertising and promotion of doctors or medical practices, it can be confusing as to whom or what to trust to determine if the doctor you select is, in fact, a Top Doctor. That is why Castle Connolly Medical produces this list working only with physicians and hospital administrators. Liss-Levinson says the best way to gain information on Top Doctors is by asking their peers who work with them or share patients with them.

"It is common for patients to be overwhelmed with the process of selecting a physician," said Dr. Raskauskas. "Sometimes it is difficult to understand their diagnosis let alone trying to find a good doctor to treat it. That is why we are fortunate that a Top Doctors list is available to people in Southwest Florida."

This is not the first time Drs. Walker and Raskauskas have been named Top Doctors. They were included in the list last year as well. The other physicians of Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida have also had the privilege of being on Gulfshore Life Magazine's Top Doctor List in the past.

*information obtained from Gulfshore Life Magazine

New Occupational Therapist Joins the Retina Consultants Family

Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida has a new member of the Low Vision Rehabilitation team.

Heather W. Holderfield joins the practice as the on-staff Occupational Therapist. Heather has a diverse background in Psychology and Social Work from her baccalaureate education and professional experience in Alabama. Heather obtained her Master's Degree and pursued the specialized training to receive her Graduate Certificate in Low Vision Rehabilitation at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She works hand-in-hand with Dr. Donald Fletcher, the Director of the Low Vision Rehabilitation Center, and with patients who are experiencing low vision due to eye related diseases. Heather is also employed part-time as an Occupational Therapist at Lee Memorial Health Systems. However, it is at Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida where she is able to hone her skills with ophthalmic rehabilitation.

"As an Occupational Therapist with the additional training in Low Vision Rehabilitation, I have the opportunity to provide therapy services to patients who have low vision affecting their daily activities," said Heather. "Patients with low vision may have difficulties performing various activities including reading, writing, self-care tasks, leisure pursuits and/or functional mobility. As a result, my role is to maximize patients' functional independence in order for them to be safe and successful at home, as well as within the community. It is very rewarding to observe patients' progress as they are empowered to regain their independence," continued Heather.

Heather takes the place of Linda Goodwin, Retina Consultants Occupational Therapist for nine years. Linda and her family moved to Alabama where Linda is teaching Occupational Therapy at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the school where Heather studied.

"Joining Retina Consultants has been an exciting opportunity for me," said Heather. "My education and fieldwork during graduate school has truly provided me with the training to sup-

plement the services of Retina Consultants ophthalmologists. As the Occupational Therapist, I receive referrals from our ophthalmologists and initiate rehabilitation with the patients, as warranted. Overall, this type of rehabilitation is available to improve patients' quality of life affected by the low vision."

In addition to her normal role of working with patients individually, Heather will facilitate Retina Consultants Low Vision Support Group Meetings.

"The purpose of the support group meetings is to provide a support network to individuals with various types of low vision," said Heather. "During a support group meeting, these individuals can disclose their personal experiences, as related to vision, and offer creative, adaptive strategies to others with similar diagnoses. These strategies often help others realize that there are modifications available to improve their functional independence. Oftentimes, the support group meeting can address various community resources available to people with low vision," concluded Heather.

A visit with Heather occurs on a referral basis only. We encourage everyone that may be experiencing low vision to ask their physician if visiting the Low Vision Rehabilitation Center would be beneficial.

Heather Holderfield, MS OTR/L



New Dates Announced for Low Vision Support Group

Retina Consultants encourages patients to discuss some of the challenges that living with low vision can cause. Each month, patients along with their spouses, friends or loved ones meet at one of the four Retina Consultants offices to discuss new ways of dealing with their low vision.

If you are interested in joining one of the free Low Vision Support Groups, please call (239) 938-1200 extension 683. **Registration is required for each meeting.** You will be asked to leave your name, telephone number and the office where you would like to attend the meeting. Here are the upcoming dates and locations of our next meetings:

Fort Myers:	November 16	at 10 am
Naples:	December 12	at 10 am
Cape Coral:	January 23	at 10 am
Port Charlotte:	February 20	at 10 am

All meetings are held at Retina Consultants offices in the respective cities.

Time for Giving:

Tips on Donating to Charities

As the holidays approach, millions of Americans are trying to determine which charities they will donate to and how much they want to give. It is at holiday time when most charities find their dollars stretched thin. According to Give.org, an online website connected to the Better Business Bureau, the ever-increasing costs, the loss of government funding, and an increasing demand for services, charities are responding by asking for larger contributions than ever before.

Many charities spend large amounts of time and money fundraising and soliciting your hard-earned dollars. Because, as we have seen in times of national crisis, some charities are either not legitimate or dedicate very little of each dollar to the cause it supports, we have some advice for the average charitable donor courtesy of Give.org:

1. Do not give cash: Always make contributions by check and make your check payable to the charity not the individual collecting the donation. This way, your contribution can be tracked via a paper trail.
2. Keep records of your donations: Receipts, cancelled checks, and bank statements will document your charitable giving at tax time. Although the value of your time as a volunteer is not deductible, out of pocket expenses, including transportation costs, directly related to your volunteer service to a charity are deductible.
3. Don't be fooled by names that look impressive or that closely resemble the name of a well-known organization.
4. Check out the organization with the local charity registration office (usually a division of the state attorney general's office) and with the Better Business Bureau.

When it comes to eye and vision research, there are a few reputable charities that receive high marks for their organization according to charity comparison websites. Those include:

1. The Schepens Eye Research Institute: (617) 912-2666
2. Foundation Fighting Blindness: 1(800) 683-5555
3. Doheny Eye Institute: (323) 442-7101
4. Prevent Blindness America: 1(800) 331-2020

For more information about charitable giving or to receive a subscription about charities and donations, you can contact the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance at (703) 247-9321 or write to them at:

Council for Better Business Bureau
Wise Giving Alliance
4200 Wilson Blvd. Suite 800
Arlington, VA 22203

LOW VISION



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
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Study Finds Heart Failure Risks in Two Diabetic Drugs



Dr. Paul A. Raskauskas

A new study out of Wake Forest University finds patients taking the diabetic drugs Avandia or Actos double the chance of developing heart failure compared to people not using the diabetic drugs.

Avandia and Actos are used by more than three million Americans. Study investigators find that for every 50 patients with type 2 diabetes taking Avandia or Actos, one patient will develop heart failure in approximately two years. This news comes on the heels of a U.S. government study out in July 2007 that found Avandia's heart risks are far higher than its counterpart Actos. Now, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is determining whether Avandia warrants a stronger warning label or even if it should be removed from drug store shelves altogether.

"This is disturbing news for our patients," said Dr. Paul Raskauskas of Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida. "From what the study results show, both drugs increase the risk of heart failure regardless of the dosage amounts. We now know that the risk occurs even at the lowest doses and at any age. Plus, the study suggests it is not limited to patients on insulin, it is present even among patients without any risk factors for heart failure."

GlaxoSmithKline, the makers of Avandia, say they still believe their drug is safe. They say extensive clinical data shows no increase in cardiovascular deaths or an increase in heart attacks. The company is still in negotiations with the FDA to determine if a new warning label is needed.

"If patients are taking these prescription drugs, they need to consult their physicians immediately," said Dr. Raskauskas. "But don't stop taking the medication only based on a news report."

Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida will continue to monitor this story and will bring you updates via our Eye Openers Newsletter and on our website, www.eye.md.

"Education is when you read the fine print. Experience is what you get if you don't."

Pete Seeger, Singer & Composer

News From NORI®

National Ophthalmic Research Institute®



Dr. Tom Ghuman

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is an eye disease associated with aging that gradually destroys the sharp, central vision. AMD is the most common cause of irreversible loss of vision in people over the age of 60. AMD affects the "macula", the part of the retina that allows you to see fine detail. Loss of vision from AMD can seriously alter a patient's ability to perform normal everyday tasks, such as reading or driving. There are two forms of AMD: Dry and Wet.

- Dry AMD accounts for about 90 percent of all cases. The light sensitive cells in the macula slowly break down, causing gradual loss of central vision.
- Wet AMD accounts for about 10 percent of all cases, but can cause severe vision loss in a short period of time. As Dry AMD worsens, new, abnormal blood vessels may begin to grow, causing blood and fluid to be present in the macula.

Many research studies are underway developing treatments to prevent vision loss from AMD. In the last decade, there have been several new drugs made available for the treatment of Wet AMD. Among these treatments are Photodynamic Therapy (PDT), Macugen, Lucentis, and various anti-inflammatory drugs.

PDT uses laser combined with a light-sensitive drug to destroy abnormal blood vessels in the macula. Macugen and Lucentis are injected into the eye and are designed to block abnormal blood vessel growth and fluid leakage. Anti-inflammatory drugs are injected in or around the eye to decrease inflammation or fluid leakage.

The National Ophthalmic Research Institute (NORI) is participating in studies combining many of these drugs for the treatment of Wet AMD.

"Combination therapy may decrease the frequency of injections into the eye," said Dr. Tom Ghuman of Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida and an Investigator with NORI. "These therapies may also reduce the total risks and side-effects of treatment."

Patients who are eligible for the studies must have Wet AMD and may not have received any prior treatments for Wet AMD. Please call NORI at **239-938-1284** if you are interesting in participating in AMD research.