

# Newsletter

December 2009

**FIGHT  
FOR  
SIGHT**  
EYE RESEARCH

Registered charity number 1111438

Christmas is a time of year that many of us rely on our sight to make the most of the festive season.

For many people, however, this is a time of year which can be very isolating. Sight loss can make it especially difficult – whether it be due to age-related macular degeneration, cataract, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy or any other eye condition.

Our researchers are working tirelessly to find ways to ensure those living with eye disease and sight loss will one day have treatments available to improve or restore their sight. They are also developing ways to prevent sight loss from happening at all.



A winter scene with normal vision compared with how someone with AMD might see it

Turn over for some of our research successes this year

## Looking back on 2009

This really is such an exciting time for eye research and despite the difficult economic climate we are so pleased with the developments being made thanks to your generosity. Please see overleaf for just some of the progress you have helped make possible in 2009.

Fight for Sight is hugely dependent on gifts kindly left in people's wills. Unfortunately during the year we have seen a decline in their value. It has also been more difficult to get financial support from companies. **This is why your support is so important.**

We are also very grateful to all of you who dedicate your own time to fundraising for Fight for Sight, whether it be through organising a coffee morning, or running a marathon. As well as generating vital funds, your efforts help to raise awareness about the importance of eye research, which is so often overlooked.

Each and every person who has supported our work should be incredibly proud of what we have achieved together, and so excited about what can be achieved in the future.

## Development in AMD treatment

One of our most exciting developments this year has come about through the work of Professor John Marshall at King's College London and co-funded by Fight for Sight.

He and his team have developed a new laser technique that could help prevent the development of age-related macular degeneration (AMD). AMD is the cause of sight loss in 40% of visually impaired people in the UK, so any developments will have a huge impact on thousands of lives.

Professor Marshall is planning to commence clinical trials as soon as possible. Whilst this stage of his research work will take some time to complete, there is great hope that it will eventually be fundamental in changing the lives of thousands of people.

About his work, Professor Marshall said: "This laser treatment is aimed at reversing the underlying ageing process in the eye, resetting the clock so that patients no longer suffer the effects of clogging that can accelerate AMD. It is hoped that this technique could prevent the development of AMD in patients with early stage disease."

Any further developments in this study will be reported on our website [www.fightforsight.org.uk](http://www.fightforsight.org.uk) and in future Fight for Sight newsletters.

## Thanks to your support our achievements this year include:

- Exciting progress in the development of stem cell therapies for AMD as a result of a new collaboration between Pfizer and the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology, building on research supported by Fight for Sight
- A new jointly funded £1.2m five year project looking into ways to prevent scarring and reverse optic nerve blindness from glaucoma and other diseases.
- Further investment into the future of eye research of £500,000 for five new PhD studentships, which will be dedicated to investigating retinitis pigmentosa, corneal disease, keratoconus, cornea transplants and inherited blindness
- A commitment to five new three-year grants which started in the second half of 2009. These will research areas such as uveitis, glaucoma, corneal disease and retinal disease.

## Helping people with cataract - the most common cause of blindness worldwide

We reported earlier this year about the work of Dr Michael Wormstone at the University of East Anglia. At the moment there is no way of preventing cataract and whilst surgery to treat the condition is relatively simple and effective, there is still the risk of developing 'after-cataract' which can occur after surgery. Dr Wormstone's work, funded by Fight for Sight, is aiming to address these problems. It has the potential to improve the lives of millions of people worldwide.

To be able to eventually find ways to prevent cataract Dr Wormstone is analysing different forms of cataract using a number of modern research techniques. He has already determined certain responses linked to the formation of cataract, which will form the basis of developing new treatments.

We are delighted that our 2009 spring appeal raised more than £26,500 to support this vital research.



The effects of cataract on sight