

Patients Needed for NEI Study Of Senile Macular Degeneration

The Clinical Branch of the National Eye Institute is seeking patients who have early signs of senile macular degeneration (SMD) to participate in a study to determine whether a combination of medication and protective sunglasses can prevent progression of this eye disease or decrease its severity. Senile macular degeneration is the leading cause of severe visual loss among people age 65 and over.

The term macular degeneration refers to a group of diseases that cause deterioration of the macular region of the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye that transmits visual impulses via the optic nerve to the brain. Only people with the kind of macular degeneration associated with aging—senile macular degeneration—will be enrolled in the NEI study.

Another name for this eye disease is aging-related maculopathy.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to participate in the study, people must be 50 to 85 years old and have poor central vision in one eye because of SMD, combined with only early signs of SMD in the other eye.

A total of 225 patients will be randomly assigned to receive a placebo or the medication. Patients in both groups will receive a capsule to be taken three times a day with meals. In addition, all patients will be asked to wear special yellow glasses which decrease the amount of ultraviolet or blue light reaching the retina. They will be instructed to wear them at all times outdoors during the day and inside when fluorescent or other bright lights are in use.

Participants will have an eye examination and receive a new supply of capsules every 4 months. There appears to be no known risk in wearing the special yellow glasses, although there will be a mild yellow brightening or discoloration to objects while wearing them. Risk from the medication used in the study is believed to be minimal, but participants will be carefully monitored to ensure that any possible adverse effects are detected early.

NEI has an annual budget of more than \$1 million for research on macular disease.

Study Results

One year ago, the Institute announced results from a national collaborative study of laser treatment for one type of senile macular degeneration. The study showed that treatment with a laser can dramatically reduce the risk of visual loss from the neovascular type of SMD, which is characterized by the formation of abnormal new blood vessels in the eye. Although people with this type of SMD are the ones most likely to go blind, they represent only a small portion of all those with SMD. Eighty to 95 percent suffer from the kind of macular degeneration associated with aging now under investigation at the NEI.

For additional information about the study, contact Dr. Monique Roy, Clinical Branch, Bldg. 10, Rm. 10N313, or call 496-5846. □

Six Expedited AIDS Grants by NIAID Will Fund Searches For Cause, Mode of Transmission, Immune Defects

Six new grants for the study of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) have been awarded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Funding for the grants will come from a \$4.5 million fiscal year 1983 supplemental appropriation that Congress allotted NIAID for study of AIDS.

The review and award processes, which ordinarily require several months, were expedited because the investigators will be studying AIDS, the number one priority of the U.S. Public Health Service.

Patients with AIDS have defects in some parts of their immune system, leaving them vulnerable to a wide variety of opportunistic infections such as *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, and/or unusual tumors such as Kaposi's sarcoma.

More than 2,000 cases have been reported, primarily among homosexual men, intravenous drug abusers, recent Haitian entrants to the United States, and hemophiliacs.

The six grantees are Drs. Murray B. Gardner, University of California, Davis; Norman L. Letvin, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Mass.; Victoria Monte-Wicher, New York State Department of Health, Albany; John L. Sullivan, University of Massachusetts, Worcester; Leonard Chess, Columbia University, New York, N.Y., and Sudhir Gupta, University of California, Irvine.

Within the last 2 years, a disease similar to AIDS has been observed in monkeys housed in two U.S. primate research centers. Two of the grantees, one at each center, will study this simian acquired immune deficiency syndrome (SAIDS).

Dr. Gardner will try to discover whether SAIDS is caused by a virus, another infectious agent, or some environmental factor. He will also explore how contagious the disease is by adding new rhesus monkeys to the cages of those with SAIDS.

A major goal of the project will be to find a way to reliably induce the disease so that a means of treatment and prevention can be sought. To do this, Dr. Gardner will inoculate the body fluids and tissues of animals with SAIDS into healthy monkeys and also into mice, which are easier and less expensive to work with than monkeys.

Dr. Letvin will study the immunological defect in monkeys with SAIDS and will try to isolate and identify a causative agent. He will also evaluate transmissibility of the disease by inoculating healthy monkeys with tissues from affected monkeys.

Dr. Monte-Wicher will try to clarify the mechanisms that make male homosexuals susceptible to AIDS. Working with rabbits, she will see if frequent enemas and intra-rectal administration of semen—both of which are often practiced by homosexual men—can cause a deficiency in the immune system. The rabbits will be examined for changes in their immune responses and for infections with bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi.

Another group of AIDS victims, hemophiliacs, are thought to get AIDS from an infectious agent present in the blood products they require in order to make their blood clot. One of these products is factor VIII, which is made from blood pooled from many donors.

Recent studies have shown that, apart from those with AIDS, many hemophiliacs receiving factor VIII have immune defects. Dr. Sullivan will study 240 hemophiliacs to determine if these immune defects are related to factor VIII and whether they are reversible.

Two grantees will be studying blood cells called lymphocytes, which play an important role in immunity. Drs. Chess and Gupta will analyze how various groups of lymphocytes work and interact normally and what goes awry in AIDS patients. □

Thai Dance Will Be Performed At Masur Auditorium, October 1

The Thai Culture and Performing Arts Association of Washington, D.C., in collaboration with the Thai Classical Dance School of Chicago, will hold a special performance of the "Khon," a classical dance, Oct. 1 at 8 p.m. at the Masur Auditorium, Bldg. 10.

The masked dance story is from the Ramakien, the Thai version of the great Indian epoch, "the Ramayana."

Tickets are available from the following after 6 p.m.: Chirada Becker, 576-5559; Sue Leiser, 589-1692; and Robert McDevitt, 946-4072. Tickets cost \$6 for adults and \$3 for children.

Proceeds will be donated to the NIH Patient Fund. The program is being sponsored by the NIH R&W Association and the Division of Equal Opportunity. □

Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday.—Don Marquis □



Officer Jon Pierce (l), a new addition to the NIH Police Department, receives recognition earned during his recent training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Georgia. William Fields (r), training director of the NIH Police Force, presents the letters to Officer Pierce. Officer Pierce received the highest mark in his training class of 96 percent and expert marksmanship in the practical pistol course.