



MACULAR
DEGENERATION
NEW ZEALAND

Viewpoint

The MDNZ Newsletter
Issue 1 - January 2015

0800 MACULA
(0800 622 852)

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Welcome to Viewpoint

Keeping you up to date
with the MD community

Welcome to the first MDNZ newsletter. We are thrilled to be able to share an update of what we have done and what is coming up. We advise which towns will host 2015 Education seminars, give an update on current treatments and profile our newest MDNZ Ambassador.

We would be pleased to hear from you about content you would like to see in future issues. We are particularly interested to hear your stories and publish these in future issues – be sure to send your unique experience.

During 2014, MDNZ has reached far and wide across NZ through our Awareness Week campaign, Education and Treatment seminars, community group talks, medical, optometry and pharmacy meetings and conferences, as well as the launch of an online learning programme for medical and allied health professionals such as optometrists. There has been huge interest and demand for information about MD. All of these activities were dependent upon generous sponsors, grantors and donors and we sincerely thank each and every one of you for your support to fund the sight saving work of MDNZ.

We trust you will enjoy this edition of Viewpoint.

Dianne Sharp and Phillippa Pitcher
Macular Degeneration New Zealand

MDNZ Awareness Week 2014 Highlights



Macular Degeneration Awareness bus back

The 2014 Awareness Week campaign expanded on the 2013 campaign and aimed at increasing awareness to the public, to GPs and to Optometrists. The key message was “to take the test,” driving people to use the Amsler Grid and to regularly see an optometrist once they are over 50 years of age. The campaign was delivered through multiple media channels and the 0800 ‘Save Sight’ helpline calls for May/June increased from 81 in 2013 to 401 in 2014. The website attracted 16,114 viewing sessions and the MDNZ Facebook page launched regular notices and updates – don’t forget to find us on Facebook and “like us” please.

MDNZ Awareness Week 2014 Highlights

The campaign attracted TV3 News attention and extensive radio coverage. MDNZ Ambassador, Philip Sherry, was a feature of the campaign with a You Tube video clip reading the news "about MD and the need to take action" and also a radio interview with Radio NZ. Both were popular with the NZ audience who remember him well from his news reading days on TV One. You can view this on the MDNZ website www.mdnz.org.nz.

Optometrists, Ophthalmologists and GPs were sent information packs with encouragement to display the new Amsler Grid poster, hand out brochures and to talk about MD to their patients.

Once again the Auckland Buses supported MDNZ, with the back of the bus giving out the message loud and clear. Outdoor signage was displayed just out of Christchurch and in two locations in Wellington. We thank the Auckland Bus Company and APN Media for providing these spaces at no charge to MDNZ.

Similarly Ooh Media (who had sponsored MDNZ with digital signage at both Auckland airports for Awareness Week in 2013) supported MDNZ at Awareness Week 2014 (and they have continued to ever since) with digital displays in shopping malls all around New Zealand. This support has been tremendous and has provided MDNZ with hundreds of

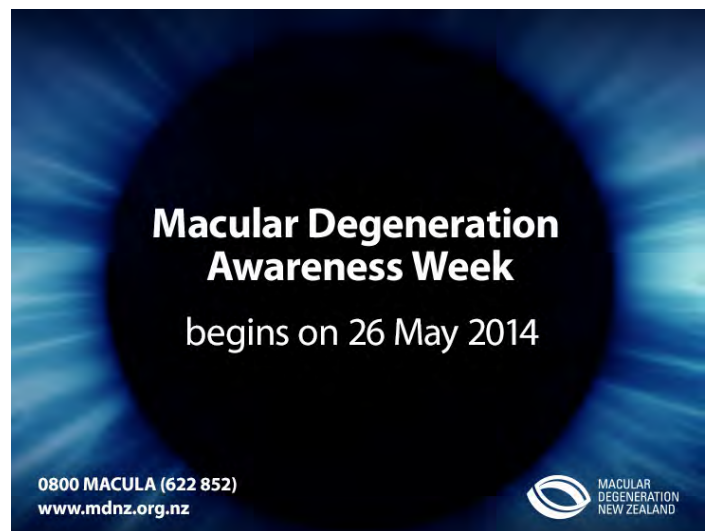


Dr Andrew Thompson beside Ooh Media's digital display



Philip Sherry's YouTube clip can be viewed from our website www.mdnz.org.nz

thousands of dollars' worth of media exposure since May 2013. Thank you Ooh Media. We are regularly advised by people that they have seen these display boards in shopping malls.



MDNZ thanks all supporters of Awareness Week 2014

**Ooh Media, Auckland Buses,
Outdoor Advertising, TV3,
Radio NZ, TV One Breakfast,
Logan Brooke, PR Shop, SMP
Solutions, Philip Sherry,
Grey Power, Aged Concern,
Grown ups, Supergold newsletter.**

MD treatment update

You may have heard that Macular Degeneration (MD) is the leading cause of blindness in the over 50 age group in NZ. It accounts for almost 50% of those who have severe vision loss in NZ.

When you have an eye test, ensure that your macula is checked. Very early and mild changes may be identified. These mild changes may not progress and they do not necessarily mean that your vision is threatened so it is important to ask your eye care professional exactly what the findings in your eyes mean. Other moderate changes may progress over months and years to a gradual thinning of areas of the retina (dry MD) with some patchy loss of vision.

The main cause of severe vision loss, however, is related to wet MD where abnormal blood vessels in the retina leak, bleed and form a scar within weeks or months. These abnormal blood vessels grow because of an abnormally high level of a vascular growth factor (VEGF). Anti-VEGF treatments have proven to be very effective in counteracting the abnormal growth of these rogue blood vessels, preventing further damage to the retina. Three

main drugs (Avastin, Lucentis and Eylea) have been through treatment trials and the results have been remarkable: 95% of patients had stable vision, 40% retained driving vision and 30% gained vision (up to 3 lines on a vision chart). Since these treatments have been introduced in 2005 there has been a reduction in the number of people with MD who are being registered with the Blind Foundation in NZ while Israel, Scotland and Denmark have also reported a 50% reduction in the number of people who are being registered blind as a result of MD.

Early symptoms of wet MD may be sudden blurring of vision or distortion. Checking each eye individually is important and the Amsler Grid helps with this. Critical factors for the best outcomes from these treatments are early detection, early treatment and a clear understanding of the need for ongoing regular monitoring and treatments.

If you notice any changes in your vision, get your macula checked. Time lost is vision lost!

Dr Dianne Sharp
Ophthalmologist

Connecting with the medical, optometry and pharmacy community

Have you noticed your GP or Optometrist displaying the new MDNZ poster encouraging people to "Take the test" with the Amsler Grid?

Around the country, many GP medical practices are recognising the importance of increasing awareness by displaying the Amsler Grid poster and initiating conversations about MD.

During 2014 we attended two GP conferences (Rotorua and Dunedin), the NZ Association of Optometrists conference, the Royal Australia and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists conferences and the Goodfellow Learning Conference.

1 in 7 people over 50 will get **Macular Degeneration**

This simple test could **Save Your Sight.**

1 Do not remove glasses or contact lenses normally used for reading.
2 Stand approximately 33cm from the grid in a well-lit room.
3 Cover one eye with your hand and focus on the centre dot with the uncovered eye. Repeat with the other eye.
4 If you see wavy, broken or distorted lines, or blurred or missing areas of vision, you may be displaying symptoms of Macular Degeneration and should contact your eye care professional immediately.

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We have given over 6500 information packs to these groups at conferences and during Awareness Week.

In July we launched the first online continuing professional development course for medical and allied health professionals to complete. By the end of the year 54 professionals had completed the course with very favourable feedback about the usefulness of the course.

To participate in this FREE online course go to www.goodfellowlearning.org.nz and search for Understanding Macular Degeneration.

Education and Treatment Seminars launched May 2014

In line with Awareness Week, MDNZ launched the 2014 education and treatment seminars in Christchurch in May. This was followed by Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Dunedin, New Plymouth, Gisborne, Tauranga, Napier and Auckland. Thank you to ophthalmologists: Dr Jim Borthwick, Dr David Worsley, Dr John Ah-Chan, Dr Helen Long, Dr Andrew Thompson, Dr Kevin Taylor, Dr Graham Wilson, Dr Kay Evans, Dr Muhammad Ibrar Khalid, Dr Dianne Sharp and Dr David Squirrell.

Thanks also to sponsor Bayer NZ and grantor NZ Lottery Community Organisations Grants Scheme for their support. We were quite astounded by the numbers registering and turning up on the day. People want to know more.

In addition to the education and treatment seminars MDNZ was invited to speak to 17 community groups in 2014 to a total audience of 878 people. These are led by local ophthalmologists telling the MD story as presented by MDNZ, often together with a local personal story.



Dr Helen Long speaking in Lower Hutt



A large crowd turned out to hear Dr Ibrar Khalid in Napier

Education Seminars 2015

The education seminars in 2014 in the larger cities were so successful that we are planning regional seminars in 2015.

Planned locations are:

Whangarei/Kerikeri	Timaru
Rotorua/Taupo	Invercargill/South Otago
Kapiti Coast/Levin/Wairarapa	Auckland
Blenheim/Nelson	

We will advise you of dates, times and locations of the seminar near you, just as soon as we can finalise them.



Dr Rachel Barnes speaks to Pakuranga Ladies Probud Club



Please donate to support those with MD

Title Mr / Mrs / Ms / Miss / Other

First name

Last name

Name to appear on tax receipt

Street address

Suburb

City Postcode

Email

Phone (home)

Phone (mobile)

I would like to give a gift (choose one)

Single Monthly Annually

Amount \$200 \$150 \$100 \$50 or \$

I would like to pay by (choose one)

Cheque (enclosed)

Credit card VISA / Mastercard (circle one)

Card number

Cardholder's name

Amount \$ Expiry date /

Signature

For online donations visit www.mdnz.org.nz

Thank you

- I would like to receive information about MD
- I would like to receive the MDNZ newsletter
- Please send me more information about leaving a gift/ bequest for MDNZ in my will

Please complete this form and return to

**Macular Degeneration New Zealand,
PO Box 137070, Parnell, Auckland 1151
or Fax 09 307 2021**

For assistance phone **0800 MACULA
(0800 622 852)**

Donations over \$5 are tax deductible.

Why funding is so important

Each year MDNZ provides information, education, support and advice to thousands of people around New Zealand. MDNZ is a charitable organisation and has NO government or outside funding to do this work. **WE NEED YOUR HELP.**

In 2014 we received 4 times as many calls as in 2013 to the free 0800 Save Sight Helpline. We provided 12 Education and Treatment seminars in 10 locations around NZ – 1510 people attended and heard the latest information from a local eye care professional. A further 878 people attended 17 community presentations around NZ. All attendees at these events received a comprehensive information pack about MD.

1 in 7 people over 50 are affected by macular degeneration. In NZ every hour 171 people turn 50, joining the 'at risk' group. We need these people to know about MD. Time lost is vision lost. Awareness and education programmes, the availability of information packs and continuation of the 0800 save sight Helpline are vital tools to ensure early detection, early intervention and prevention of sight loss.

Some people who have MD recognise that there is a 50% chance that their children have the genes to develop MD, but many don't. How can MDNZ get the information out, increase awareness and educate the wider community without funding?

In order to continue our sight saving work we would be very grateful for your donation using the donation form attached to this newsletter or online via www.mdnz.org.nz to donate now.

Thank you for your support

Support 2015 MDNZ fundraising events

MDNZ Race Day

It's not too late to get your ticket to join the MDNZ fundraising Race Day at Ellerslie on Valentine's Day 14 February 2015. We are making up tables of ten at \$125 per person and we would love you to join us. Last year was a great success and this year is going to be even better. Call us NOW on 0800 622 852 for tickets, \$125 per person to join a table of ten.



French Film Festival

The annual Alliance Francaise French Film Festival returns to NZ with screenings all around the country. Essilor Laboratories, a Silver sponsor of the event, are sponsoring MDNZ at a screening of "Barbeque" – described by Le Parisien magazine as a tasty comedy about friendship in your forties and fifties, centered around Lambert Wilson in crisis-mode!

Come along to this fun evening – bubbles on arrival, a great goodie bag and movie - \$30 per ticket. Monday 2nd March 6:30pm Rialto theatre.

Call us on 0800 622 852 to secure your tickets now as last year was a sell out!

Time lost is vision lost!

MDNZ emphasises that early detection and treatment of the wet form of MD is critical to saving sight. If 50% of "at risk" New Zealanders (over 50yrs) do not know about MD, potential treatment time will be lost.

MDNZ Ambassador Profile - Viv Jones

Meet Viv Jones who is our newest Ambassador. Viv was an inaugural Trustee with MDNZ from 2009 until 2014. Viv is affected by MD and has had multiple treatments to stabilise her vision. She has worked tirelessly for MDNZ and has been interviewed on television, national and local radio. She has shared her story and spoken about MD at community meetings, service clubs, public seminars and conferences for Eye Care professionals. Viv tells her story and gives hope to people who are in fear of losing their sight.

You can read Viv's story on the MDNZ website – www.mdnz.org.nz - Stories.



We are delighted that Viv has agreed to join our high profile New Zealanders who are representing MDNZ as Ambassadors.

Our other Ambassadors are: John Adshead,

Dame Kate Harcourt, Dame Rosie Horton, Sir Peter Leitch, Sir Colin Meads and Philip Sherry. They are all passionate about saving sight and endorse our work. We thank them all for their valuable support.