



— COMMUNICATIONS —

PRESS RELEASE

TO: Editor in Charge

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Help and Hope for Those with Age-Related Macular Degeneration

March is AMD / Low Vision Month and the American Academy of Ophthalmology Encourages Everyone to Learn More About Available Treatments

(Honolulu, Hawaii), March 22, 2010 – Age related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of visual impairment for Americans 50 years of age and older. Although there currently is no cure of AMD, there is still hope those living with the illness. As part of AMD / Low Vision Awareness Month, the American Academy of Ophthalmology urges everyone experiencing vision loss to conduct regular visits with an eye care professional to be screened for age-related vision problems and to also discuss available treatments.

“AMD is a progressive and usually painless disease that causes central vision to blur while leaving peripheral vision unaffected,” said Christopher Tortora, Medical Director at Hawaiian Eye Center in Wahiawa. “Because it develops slowly, a patient will not notice it until vision has been severely impaired.”

There are two forms of AMD known as “wet” and “dry.” Patients with dry AMD may experience a blind spot in the central vision. Although only 10% of those with AMD have the wet form, it is the most severe between the two causing rapid vision loss. In the stage of wet AMD, patients develop abnormal blood vessel formation under the retina. These blood vessels can leak fluid and cause sudden and drastic loss of central vision.

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Some of the risks involved for AMD include being over the age of 50, hypertension, cigarette smoking, obesity and having a family history of AMD. For patients with a high risk for developing AMD, taking a dietary supplement of vitamin C, vitamin E and beta carotene, along with zinc, has proven to slow the progression of AMD by 25%. Also, conventional laser and photodynamic therapy can reduce the risk of moderate to severe vision loss in patients with specific forms for wet AMD.

For those living with AMD, there is hope and help available. Experimental treatments, including intraocular injections of antineovascular factors and the insertion of a “retinal chip” which may restore vision loss, are being investigated. As of the moment, there are devices that can give patients a sense of normalcy. These tools include electronic magnifiers, reading machines and signature guides.

“Vision loss does not have to lead to loss of independence,” said Dr. Tortora. “If you have low vision, an eye care professional can provide low vision rehabilitation and services that can help you maintain quality of life.”

There is no cure of AMD. Although treatments, services and devices are available to help ease the illness, the best defense against vision loss is early detection.

Dr. Tortora, a board certified ophthalmologist, is host of “The Hawaiian Eye Show,” a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision. He and his colleagues at Hawaiian Eye Center are committed to educating the public about the importance of preventative eye care. To learn more about a variety of eye health issues, please call the Hawaiian Eye Center at 621-8488 where “*life has never looked better.*”

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