



# PRESS RELEASE

To: News Editors & Directors

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Date: February 2, 2007

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **RECENT DISCOVERIES FURTHER LINK GENETICS TO AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION**

#### **Dr. Christopher Tortora urges those with AMD family history to be aware of symptoms**

*(Honolulu, Hawaii), February 2, 2007-* Recent discoveries regarding Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) reported in “Science Daily” have shown further links between genetics and the onset of AMD. Results for these two research projects were announced within the last two months and highlight the need for continuing research as the American Academy of Ophthalmology begins “Age-Related Macular Degeneration Month” in February.

In the first study, researchers at Yale University found just a one-base change in the sequence of one gene (specifically the change was named as a single nucleotide polymorphism-SNP- on the HTRA1 gene of chromosome 10) increased a patient’s chance to develop the dangerous “wet” form of AMD by ten times.

“While not every patient will understand the science behind this discovery, it is important they do take away the fact that family history and genetic make-up are things to be aware of when we talk about AMD,” said Hawaiian Eye Center Medical Director Christopher Tortora, M.D. “Patients who are more likely to develop AMD are those who are over 50 years old, those with hypertension, those that smoke and of course, those with a family history of AMD.”

Age-Related Macular Degeneration is a common disease that causes light-sensitive cells in the retina to break down. The result for patients with AMD is a loss of sharp central vision and if not caught in time, eventual blindness.

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Researchers from Harvard Medical School and nearby Brigham and Women’s Hospital found that patients in their study with two mutated genes were 50 times more likely to develop AMD than patients with normal copies of the two genes. Researchers also found that patients who suffer from obesity were more likely to develop AMD than non-obese people.

The “wet” form of AMD can rapidly degenerate while “dry” AMD robs vision more gradually. However, patients who experience symptoms such as seeing straight lines appear wavy, difficulty seeing at a distance, decreased ability to distinguish colors, inability to see details, such as faces or words in a book and appearance of dark or empty spots that block the center of vision should seek immediate help from their eye doctor.

“We have a number of treatments for both “Wet and “dry” forms of AMD, but the best way to treat AMD is early detection,” Dr. Tortora said. “If you think you may be at risk to develop AMD be sure to visit your eye doctor for a complete exam every one to two years.”

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 preventive eye care. To learn more about other eye health issues, please call Hawaiian Eye Center at 621-8448 where “*life has never looked better.*”

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