



New Findings Lead to Revised Therapeutic Regimen to Slow RP

By Alan Laties, M.D., Chairman of the FFB Scientific Advisory Board

The Berman-Gund Laboratory for the Study of Retinal Degenerations, at Harvard Medical School, has just completed the second in an ongoing series of clinical trials testing nutritional or other supplements as potential therapies for retinitis pigmentosa (RP). The first clinical trial completed in 1993 demonstrated a beneficial effect on visual function of Vitamin A and a deleterious effect of Vitamin E. As a result, the Foundation Fighting Blindness and the National Eye Institute jointly recommended for most adults the daily administration of 15,000 units of Vitamin A palmitate. Not fully understood, either then or now, the beneficial effect of Vitamin A was slow to take effect, becoming evident in the original clinical trial only after several years of administration.

Just completed, a second study was designed to test whether a lipid of special relevance to vision, DHA, taken as a dietary supplement would enhance the already recognized sight-saving benefit of Vitamin A. The results of the second trial are published in two reports in the September 2004 issue of the American Medical Association's *Archives of Ophthalmology*. The lead author of the report is Eliot L. Berson, M.D., who is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of The Foundation Fighting Blindness.

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FFB Supported Research Team Discovers A Second AMD Gene

by Elaine A. Richman, Ph.D.

The Foundation Fighting Blindness is pleased to announce the discovery by researchers at one of its research centers of a second gene related to age-related macular degeneration (AMD). The first AMD gene discovery was announced in December 2003 by a different team of FFB-supported researchers.

The new gene is called fibulin 5. Its relationship to AMD was found by a team at the FFB-funded Research Center for Macular Degeneration and Allied Retinal Diseases at the University of Iowa. The Center's director and lead author on the report is Edwin M. Stone, M.D., Ph.D. Dr. Stone is a member of the FFB Scientific Advisory Board.

For information about the function of the gene and how the researchers made their discovery, please visit the web site of The Foundation Fighting Blindness www.FightBlindness.org. On the home-page, click on "Research" to link to the full story.

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