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.

Six Exempted 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.


Within the last two 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.

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 "Ramayana." Tickets are available from the following after 6 p.m.: Chirada Becker, 576-5559; Sue Leiser, 589-1962; 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 RR&E Information and the Division of Equal Opportunity.

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