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Contact: Doug Shouse
North Chicago VA Medical Center
douglas.shouse@med.va.gov
(847) 578-3700

LANDMARK RESEARCH SHOWS LUTEIN SUPPLEMENTATION MAY REVERSE SYMPTOMS OF MACULAR DEGENERATION

Study Published in Optometry Journal First of its Kind

CHICAGO, IL – (April 7, 2004) – Nutritional antioxidant supplement lutein may be an effective approach in improving symptoms of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of vision loss among older Americans. The LAST study (Lutein Antioxidant Supplementation Trial) is the first trial to record actual improvement in several key visual functions among patients with AMD. The data appears in this week's *Optometry – The Journal of the American Optometric Association*.

Stuart Richer, O.D., Ph.D., chief of optometry at the North Chicago VA Medical Center and associate professor at the Illinois College of Optometry, is the LAST lead investigator. The study involved patients from the North Chicago VA Medical Center. Prior to LAST, carotenoid lutein and other antioxidants were widely believed to be purely a preventive measure in reducing risk in the onset of AMD among high-risk patients.

“Our findings show that AMD symptoms may be reversed through purified lutein supplementation or a supplement mix of lutein and other antioxidants such as vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, and beta carotene,” said Dr. Richer. “By no means a cure for AMD, the study does show improvement among several disease symptoms in AMD patients.”

Patients ingesting the lutein supplement experienced significant improvements in several objective measurements of visual function including glare recovery, contrast sensitivity, and visual acuity vs. placebo. Patients also experienced a 50% increase in macular pigment density relative to those on placebo.

Lutein is a naturally occurring molecule found in dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach, kale and collard greens. In the LAST study, 90 AMD patients were supplemented daily with an OcuPower supplement capsule containing 10 mg of crystalline FloraGLO lutein, 10 mg lutein plus a mixed antioxidant formula, or placebo for 12 months. The average American ingests one to two mg of lutein daily.

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Previous research has suggested lutein intake fortifies the macula of the eye. The macula filters out blue wavelength light from the sun and artificial light, suppressing the oxidation of retinal cells that can otherwise cause degenerative eye disease

“Because one in eight Americans over the age of 60 has this untreatable disease, the results of the LAST study demonstrate the crucial need to conduct larger studies over a longer period of time of lutein and antioxidant nutritional therapies,” added Dr. Richer.

About North Chicago VA Medical Center

The North Chicago VA Medical Center's mission is to provide integrated, high quality, comprehensive mental health, extended and primary care services to patients served by the VA Great Lakes Health Care System-VISN 12. The medical center consists of 150 operating hospital beds, 204 nursing home care beds, 60-bed domiciliary for the homeless veterans. NCVAMC is an affiliated facility with appropriate acute care components, which are necessary to fulfill its mission of mental health, extended and primary care. These supportive acute components include primary and secondary medical care, ambulatory surgery and rehabilitation medicine to support an aging veteran population.

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