**Regional Newsletter Update from Marian Williams (Regional Manager North Wales) May 2022.**

Hello, who is enjoying the sunshine and the beautiful colours of spring, I am!

**Groups Update**

Llandudno Support Group – 1stMonday of every month at 11am

Abergele Support Group – 3rdMonday of every month at 1.30pm

Pwllheli Support Group – 1st Friday of every month at 1pm

Llangollen Support Group – 4th Monday of every month at 11am

Aberystwyth Support Group – 4th Wednesday of every month at 11am

Welshpool Support Group – every other Tuesday of every month at 2pm

Newtown Support Group – 1st Monday of every month at 2pm

Dolgellau Support Group – 3rd Wednesday of every month at 1.30pm

Holyhead Support Group – 3rd Tuesday of every month at 1pm

Bangor Town – 2nd Monday of every month at 1pm

Harlech Support Group – 4th Thursday of every month at 1.30pm

**All Wales Macular Society Group Calls**

As majority of groups in Wales are resuming face-to-face meetings, we have set up four weekly **All Wales telephone calls** to help those who are unable to make it to meetings in person. Please do tell your members about the All-Wales Group Calls.

First Wednesday at 11am – English

Second Wednesday at 2pm – Welsh Only

Third Wednesday at 2pm – English

Fourth Wednesday at 11am – English

These will be hosted by, Adele Francis (South Wales) and Marian Williams (North Wales). Please feel free to join the calls even if you are attending the face-to-face meetings and need further information.

**RESEARCH UPDATE -** Drug trial for dry AMD A drug being trialled for dry age-related macular degeneration (AMD) can significantly reduce the progression of the disease, according to new studies.

Phase three trials have shown that injections of a drug called pegcetacoplan resulted in a significant reduction in the rate at which the cells of the macular degenerate.

The studies by Apellis Pharmaceuticals built on previous research which showed that dry AMD is linked to the complement system and a hyperactive immune response that damages the eyes. Pegcetacoplan is a complement system inhibitor, meaning it aims to prevent this response from happening and harming healthy cells and tissue.

The studies involved two phase three clinical trials (DERBY and OAKS) involving more than 1,250 patients with late stage dry AMD, often referred to as geographic atrophy (GA). As part of the trials some patients received injections monthly, while others received them every other month.

In the combined results of the two trials, patients who received the drug monthly showed up to a 21% reduction in progression of the disease after 18 months, while those who were injected every other month had a 17% reduction.

Jeffrey S. Heier, principal investigator of the DERBY study from Ophthalmic Consultants of Boston, said: “It is exciting to see these positive data with pegcetacoplan, which showed continuous and potentially improving effects over time. These 18-month results provide further evidence that pegcetacoplan meaningfully slows disease progression and has the potential to preserve vision longer.” The study also found that pegcetacoplan was generally safe and well tolerated by those on the trial.

Results of the studies are to be submitted to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for review by the end of June 2022, with the hope that the drug will be licenced for use in the USA.

**Researchers reveal more about potential new drug for AMD**

Researchers working on a new treatment that could stop dry age-related macular degeneration (AMD) developing into wet will reveal more detail about the drug in April.

Over the last three years Dr Whiteford and his team at Queen Mary University London have been testing the safety of the drug which has been found to stop blood vessel growth at the back of the eye, as part of a Macular Society-funded project.

Wet AMD is characterised by the formation of abnormal new blood vessels deep inside the eye. When these leak fluid and blood into the eye, cells are damaged and loss of vision occurs. Current treatments involve anti-VEGF drugs, injected regularly into the eye. Although these treatments are successful in delaying the progression of wet AMD, not all patients respond to them. Dr Whiteford’s team aims to develop an alternative therapy, which works by stopping the new blood vessels forming.

The team has proven in pre-clinical tests that a particular protein can inhibit the process by which new blood vessels form, and are now working towards human clinical trials.

If you would like further information about any of the topics raised in the newsletter, please contact me on 07494 468 007 or you can ring the Advice and Information number on 0300 3030 111.

Best wishes, Marian.