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**Volunteer Newsletter Update December 2022.**

Hello everyone,

Bonfire has been, Christmas is coming at pace, have you started your Christmas shopping? What smells remind you of Christmas, here are some of mine? Mulled wine, cinnamon, pine, orange, clove, gingerbread, rosemary, and thyme.

**Macular Group Meetings Update**

Our groups provide information and support to those with macular disease, their family, and friends. Each one is a welcoming and compassionate place to learn about the support available, build your confidence, and better understand your own macular disease. And, of course, it’s a chance to make new friends who really understand what sight loss is like.

Please note that some of our local groups meet via telephone conference call while some are meeting in person. To join a group, or confirm if a specific group is meeting face to face or by telephone, please contact:

North Wales - Marian Williams, Regional Manager North Wales,

**07495 054 053.**

South Wales - Adele Francis, Senior Regional Manager South Wales, **07494 468 007**.

Macular Society Advice and Information Line - **0300 3030 111**.

**All Wales Macular Telephone Support Group Call**

As the majority of groups in Wales have now resumed 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.

These will take place on:

* First Wednesday of the Month 11am – 12pm - English Speaking
* Second Wednesday of the Month 2pm – 3pm - Welsh speaking
* Third Wednesday of the month 2pm – 3pm – English speaking
* Fourth Wednesday of the month 11am – 12pm – English Speaking

These will be hosted by Adele Francis (South Wales) and Marian Williams (North Wales).

**Research Update**

**Statins and diabetes drugs found to reduce risk of age-related macular degeneration**

Drugs to control diabetes and lower cholesterol may reduce the risk of developing age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a new study suggests.

The study, published in the British Journal of Ophthalmology, saw researchers draw together information from 14 studies to assess whether drugs to lower cholesterol, control diabetes, and dampen down inflammation may help to lessen the risk of developing AMD.

Previous research has shown positive results from these drugs, but findings have been contradictory and based on small numbers of participants.

Scientists at the University Hospital Bonn in Germany examined the studies involving almost 40,000 people from the UK, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Russia.

Participants in the studies which included around 9,332 with AMD, were all over the age of 50 and taking at least one type of drug to: lower cholesterol – including statins; control diabetes – including insulin; to control inflammation – excluding steroids; or a drug to treat movement disorders caused by neurodegenerative disease.

Researchers found that people taking drugs to lower cholesterol had a 15% reduced risk of developing AMD compared to those who were not taking the drugs. Meanwhile, people taking medicine to control diabetes appeared to have a 22% lesser risk. No such associations were found for the other types of drugs being taken by people involved with the study.

While further research is needed to examine the findings, the authors said: “Our study indicates an association of systemic use of LLD (lipid-lowering drugs) and antidiabetic drugs with lower AMD prevalence across several European cohort studies.”

**New partnership to accelerate research into macular disease**

Clinical research organisation Ora Inc has partnered with the Macular Society, to accelerate the advancement of new treatments for macular disease and help more patients take part in clinical trials.

According to the global company, just 3% of patients in the UK ever take part in a clinical trial, mostly due to lack of awareness and understanding of the research process.

Ora Inc will be working with the Macular Society to better understand what stops people with macular disease from getting involved in trials and increase awareness of clinical research opportunities available throughout the UK.

Sally Tucker, vice president at Ora Europe, said “People with chronic conditions such as dry age-related macular degeneration don’t have any current avenues for treatment, and without clinical research, they may be left without any ability to manage their conditions on a day-to-day basis.

“For these people, a lack of treatment can impact their ability to function in everyday life. We know there is a lack of awareness and education surrounding clinical research at patient level and together with the Macular Society, we aim to change this so that we can better understand the impact of these challenging diseases alongside how sponsors, researchers and ophthalmic professionals can provide innovative care options and pave a better path for clinical research in eye care across the UK.”

Geraldine Hoad, the Macular Society’s research manager, added, “Patients play a vital role in research. Without them, new treatments would not be developed and the progress we have seen to date would not be possible.

“By working with Ora we hope we can encourage more patients to take part in these trials and understand the wide-ranging benefits of being involved in research.” If you would like to find out more about the database, please contact Geraldine Hoad on **01264 322 419.**

**Volunteering for the Macular Society**

Have you started to think about your New Year’s resolutions yet? How about volunteering for the Macular Society?

The Macular Society is the UK’s leading charity determined to beat the fear and isolation of macular disease with world-class research, and the best advice and support. By giving your time, you will help us to reach the thousands of people living with macular disease and sight loss in your area and provide life-changing support.

Join our team of volunteers and help us make a difference to thousands of people with macular disease. Whether you can spare a few hours or a couple of days a week, you’ll be doing something great to help people with macular disease.

Everyone has a reason for volunteering. Perhaps you know someone who has macular disease, are currently supporting a loved one, or want to give something back to support your community. If you want to gain experience or develop new skills, we are sure we have something for you too.

You might work directly with our members within your local community or volunteer as a telephone befriender from the comfort of your own home. It is an exciting time to be part of the Macular Society, so join today and you’ll receive a warm welcome from our fantastic team and volunteer community.

If you’d like to have a chat about volunteering, give us a call on 01264 326 622. Please spread the word, it could have such an impact for a very worthwhile cause.

If you would like further information about any of the topics raised in the newsletter, please contact me on 07495 054053 or you can ring the Advice and Information number on **0300 3030 111**.