ALLIANCE FOR EYE AND VISION RESEARCH

In conjunction with:
Research to Prevent Blindness
Alliance for Aging Research
Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology
European Vision Institute
American Macular Degeneration Foundation
Macular Degeneration Partnership
Lighthouse Guild

continues education about eye and vision research with a Briefing that begins the Fourth Annual Emerging Vision Scientists Day on Capitol Hill, recognizing International AMD Awareness Week 2018 and Healthy Aging Month

Understanding the “Dry” Form of Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)
To Develop Effective Treatments

Thursday, September 27, 2018
12 Noon - 1:15 pm
House Rayburn 2060

Featured Speaker: Christine A. Curcio, PhD
(University of Alabama at Birmingham)

R.S.V.P. to Dina Beaumont @ 202-407-8325 or dinabeau@aol.com

AEVR, a 501(c)3 Non-Profit Educational Foundation, is pleased to host this widely attended event, with support for event management provided by Regeneron and an Eye Healthy Lunch provided by the American Macular Degeneration Foundation.
Understanding the “Dry” Form of AMD to Develop Effective Treatments
Recognizing International AMD Awareness Week 2018 and Healthy Aging Month
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What is the Burden of AMD?
AMD is the leading cause of blindness and low vision in the United States and the developed world. It destroys central vision through proliferation of new blood vessels (“wet” AMD) or gradual breakdown of cells (“dry” AMD, the most prevalent form) in the central part of the retina, or macula, which contains light-sensing cells of the eye. Vision loss from AMD makes it increasingly difficult to read, drive, and perform other everyday tasks, thereby affecting productivity, independence, and quality of life and adding significantly to the total US cost burden of eye disease, projected to reach $373 billion annually by year 2050—or $717 billion when adjusted for inflation. The National Eye Institute (NEI) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) estimates that 200,000 Americans each year go on to develop advanced AMD.

What Research Has Emerged To Treat the “Wet” and “Dry” Forms of AMD?
Tremendous strides in the treatment of patients with “wet” AMD have resulted from anti-Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor (VEGF) therapies—which emerged from initial NIH funded research—that stabilize vision loss and may improve lost vision. New therapies to treat “dry” AMD—conducted by NEI intramural staff and NEI-funded awardees—are using an AMD patient’s own blood-based stem cells to create new retina pigment epithelium that is being implanted to save and restore vision. The NEI has made 180 new grant awards from fiscal years 2010-2016 to study all aspects of the disease, including genetics (identifying more than 50 independently associated common and rare gene variants), biological pathways, biomarkers, therapeutics, and diagnostics. The NEI has launched a prospective international study of patients that uses the latest advances in retinal imaging—such as Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT)—to identify biomarkers of the disease and targets for early therapeutic interventions. This will help to address NEI’s greatest AMD challenges: diagnosing and treating the disease much earlier, and moving beyond the initial research into “dry” AMD treatments.

What Will the Speaker Address?
A major contributor to the pathology of human AMD, Christine Curcio, PhD (University of Alabama at Birmingham) has focused on the prevalent “dry” form of AMD—also called geographic atrophy—especially the composition of and the role played by the extracellular lipid-rich deposits called drusen seen in AMD. She contributed the first comprehensive histological description of subretinal drusenoid deposit, a previously unrecognized layer of AMD pathology, and has worked with collaborators to validate imaging technologies (OCT, Fundus Autofluorescence) to develop a timeline of geographic atrophy. She will describe her work and how it is leading to a great understanding of “dry” AMD to develop treatments. She will also compare and contrast the drusen deposits in “dry” AMD to protein extracellular deposits seen in cardiovascular disease and Alzheimer’s disease, improving our understanding of potentially similar disease pathways.

Since the AMD Briefing begins AEVR’s Fourth Annual Emerging Vision Scientists Day activities, culminating with an evening Poster Session and Reception, Dr. Curcio will conclude her presentation by discussing her role in mentoring Emerging Vision Scientists. All luncheon Briefing attendees and their colleagues are invited to attend the EVS Poster Reception that evening from 5:30-7:30 pm in the House Rayburn Foyer.

About the Speaker……
Christine A. Curcio, PhD is a Professor and Director of the AMD Histopathology Lab in the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine. Her extensive published papers have focused on retinal cell biology, lipoprotein biology, clinical image validation, neurodegeneration, epidemiology, and transcriptomics. She has partnered for 25 years with the Alabama Eye Bank, a large eye bank and industry leader in rapid tissue recovery for research.

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