



NATIONAL
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RESEARCH

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**Eye and Vision Breakthroughs:
Keep the Research Drive Alive!**

March 1, 2007

Letters Editor
U.S. News & World Report
1050 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007-3837

Dear Letters Editor:

On behalf of the vision research community, NAEVR wishes to commend *U.S. News & World Report* for its March 5, 2007, edition featuring recent developments in treatments for eye disease and visual impairment.

As you rightly noted, this is a significant and growing public health problem due to the aging of the population. This challenge is compounded further by the disproportionate incidence of eye disease in fast-growing minority populations and the impact on vision of chronic diseases, such as diabetes. The National Eye Institute (NEI) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) estimates that the United States incurs more than \$68 billion annually in direct and societal costs from visual disorders—let alone the incalculable impact of decreased independence and diminished quality of life.

Currently, the federal government spends less than one percent of that annual cost in vision research each year. Recent flat-funding for the NIH, coupled with biomedical inflation, has reduced dollars available for NEI-funded basic and clinical research, which has resulted in the past dramatic advances cited. Your readers should contact their Members of Congress to urge increased NIH/NEI funding to maintain the momentum of discoveries to save and restore vision.

Sincerely,

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The Consortium of Eye Banks
Women in Ophthalmology
Women's Eye Health Task Force