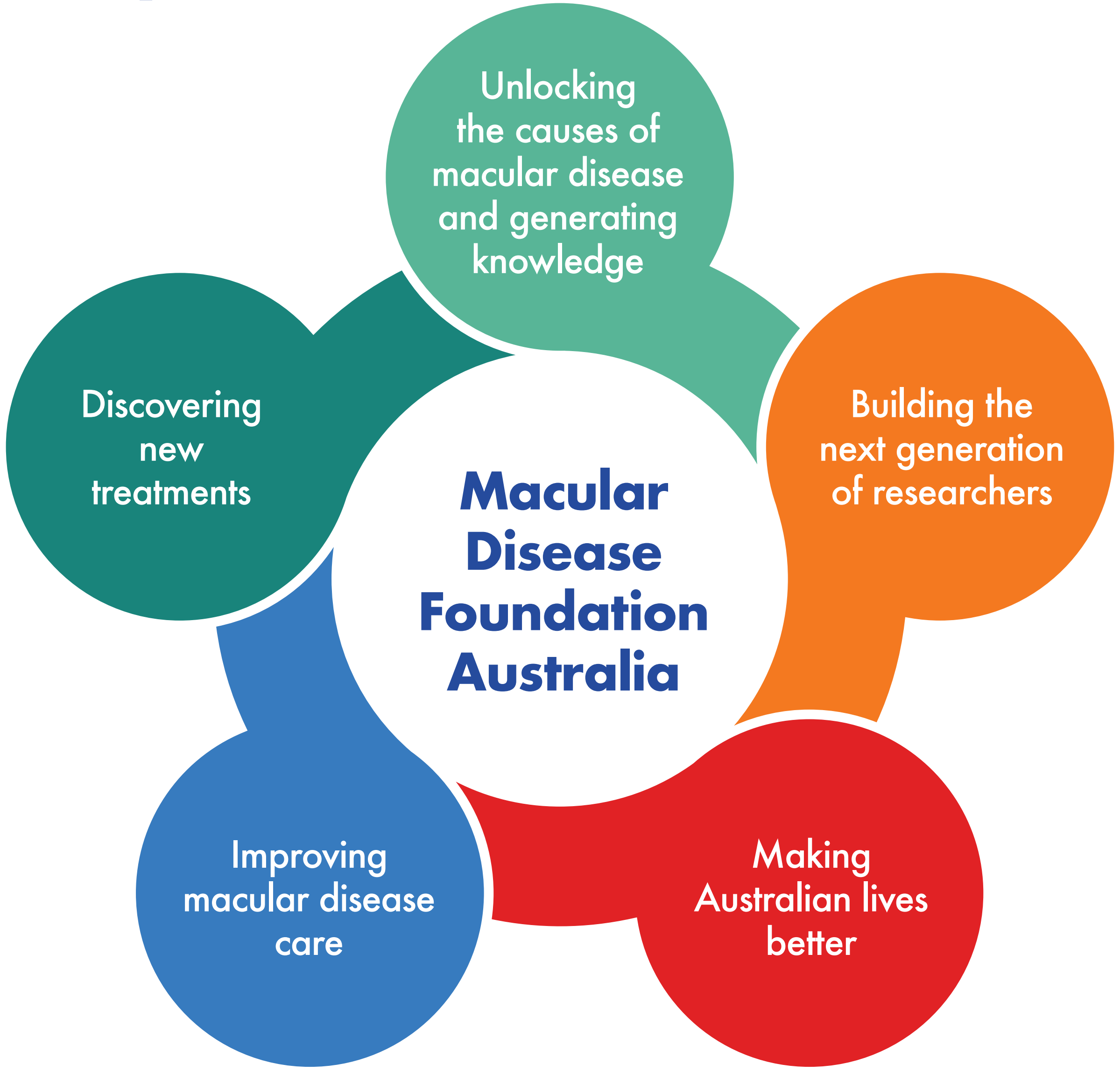
Macular
Disease
Foundation
AUSTRALIA

Research Impact Report

Visionary thinking. Revolutionary research.

Five ways our research is making an impact



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There is no cure, but there is you.

Macular Disease Foundation Australia (MDFA) is the only organisation in Australia whose sole purpose is to reduce the impact of macular disease – our country's leading cause of low vision and blindness.

Today, approximately 1.9 million Australians live with the disease. And this number is growing. Without more investment into transformative macular disease research, thousands more people will be forced to contend with the devastating impacts of this often-ignored chronic disease.

What we're doing about it

For more than a decade we have been funding vital macular and retinal disease research. This is only possible with the support of generous donors and bequests.

To date, we have invested more than $5.9 million into groundbreaking Australian research that has helped find new ways to advance treatments and reduce the burden on people living with a macular disease, as well as their carers and families.

Our Research Grants program operates with two funding streams:

1) Grants of up to $200,000 for researchers to undertake a significant project across two to three years.
2) The Grant Family Fund, which awards up to $50,000 per project for innovative 'blue sky' research projects for early career researchers over one year.

MDFA funds research into all types of macular and retinal diseases, including studies that increase knowledge of risk factors, causes, detection methods, and potential treatments for macular diseases. We are also unique in wanting to understand the emotional and social burdens of the disease.

Research costs a lot, but not doing it costs more

We receive many project funding requests from talented researchers across the country, whose work would contribute valuable evidence to the macular disease knowledge base in our country and internationally.

Regrettably, we are forced to turn many grant applications down because we do not have the necessary funds to bring these important projects to life. Every time we do so, we know that improving the lives of people, or even finding a cure for macular disease, gets further away.

Right now, we can only afford to fund six research projects every two years. This isn't even close to enough if we are going to save the sight of millions of people. We must do more, and we must do it now.

How you can help

Knowledge is our greatest weapon in the fight for sight. And you are our greatest hope.

We aim to double the number of research projects we fund by 2030. This will cost more than $3 million. Your donation is the only way we can reach these objectives, which could have an important and lasting impact on the lives of people, families and future generations.

By choosing to donate to MDFA, you will be making a direct contribution to groundbreaking research and innovations that aim to treat, prevent or slow down the progression of macular disease.

We invite you to connect with us to discuss how you can invest in Australia's leading macular disease research program.

Call us on 1800 111 709 or email us at info@mdfoundation.com.au.

Together, let's fight for the sight of all Australians.

Why Australians need your support

Foreword by Professor Paul Mitchell AO, MDFA's National Research Advisor

There is no denying the devastating impact macular disease can have on someone's life and their family. Macular disease limits functional activities such as reading and driving, and progressively causes loss of independence. In many older people this can lead to a premature need for support including nursing home care. Overall, there can be a markedly reduced quality of life, with increasing depression, as vision loss becomes irreversible. As an ophthalmologist, I see this daily in my clinic.

There is also often the pressure of affordability and limited access to treatment options. As a researcher, I am encouraged by how far we have come in our advancements in treating conditions such as neovascular (wet) age-related macular disease (AMD), which have dramatically improved outcomes, and I have guarded hope for the future, particularly for treatments for geographic atrophy, including gene therapies, complement inhibitors and stem cell treatments, and advancing technologies using newer artificial intelligence possibilities.

Concomitant improvements in diagnostic imaging, such as OCT (optical coherence tomography) and OCT angiography, have also enhanced early detection and monitoring, leading to better management and tailored treatment strategies. These advances collectively aim to preserve vision and improve the quality of life for people living with macular disease.

Ongoing randomised trials of potential therapies for geographic atrophy are crucial because current approaches to treatment are limited and often ineffective. Increasing research in this area can lead to novel therapies, improve our understanding of disease mechanisms, and potentially identify intervention points.

Increased investment into geographic atrophy research is essential to assist the large number of people facing blindness and find solutions to manage or stop disease progression. Two complement inhibitor agents have already shown promise in slowing this disease in Phase III clinical trials, and now have approval for use in the United States.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is likely to play an expanding role in AMD treatment opportunities in the future, by enhancing diagnostic accuracy through advanced imaging analysis, using datasets to predict disease progression, and potentially to personalise treatment plans and optimise drug delivery. AI algorithms can analyse large datasets to identify patterns, potentially leading to earlier detection and more effective management strategies.

It is expected that the number of people diagnosed with AMD will reach 1.7 million by 2030. Continued Australian investment into macular disease research is crucial to drive innovation, support clinical trials, and foster the development of novel therapies.

Reliable, ongoing funding will enable Australian researchers to explore new treatments and enhance their understanding of the disease.

As you read about the inspiring work into macular disease being undertaken by Australia's leading research minds, all of whom have been generously funded by the community and supported by Macular Disease Foundation Australia, I hope you will join me in pledging your commitment to fight for sight in Australia.

Professor Paul Mitchell AO
MBBS MD PhD FRANZCO FRACS FRCOphth FAFPHM

Involving the community voice in our research grant funding decisions

In 2023, MDFA initiated a new community review panel into our research grant funding decision processes. The Community Review Panel included 14 people living with a macular condition or directly supporting those living with a macular disease.

This change in process reflects MDFA's desire to represent the voice of the macular disease community and ensures that we keep people living with macular disease at the centre of the work we do. The Community Review Panel, alongside the expert Grant Review Panel, reviewed and weighted the value of the grant applications according to a set of community-specific criteria. The community panel helped us to understand the areas of research people with lived experience considered the most important.

At the end of the process, we found that the expert researchers and the community members were aligned in their recommendations, which is a testament to the quality of the funded projects.

Macular disease is a very common condition with devastating impacts

NOW	By 2030
1.9 million+ Australians have macular disease[1]	**2.1 million**
1.5 million Australians live with age-related macular degeneration(AMD)[2]	**1.7 million**
482,000 Australians are affected by diabetic eye disease [3,4,5,6]	**518,000**
99,000 Australians with late-stage dry AMD (geographic atrophy) currently have no treatment options[2]	**122,000**
750,000 (50%) of people with AMD will go blind without treatment[2]	**850,000**
285,000 (15%) of people with macular disease have a diagnosed mental health condition[7]	**315,000**

1. Australian Government Department of Health (2019). National Strategic Action Plan for Macular Disease. **2.** Deloitte Access Economics and Macular Degeneration Foundation (2011). Eyes on the future - A clear outlook on age-related macular degeneration. **3.** Aus pop in 2024: 27 million (www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/population-projections-australia/latest-release) **4.** Aus pop in 2030: 29 million (www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/population-projections-australia/latest-release) **5.** Diabetes prevalence: 5.1% of Australian population (www.aihw.gov.au/reports/diabetes/diabetes/contents/summary) **6.** Keel et al. Ophthalmology. 2017;124:977-984. **7.** Macular Disease Foundation Australia. Social Impact Survey 2. 2023.

Unlocking the causes of macular disease and generating knowledge

Sharing research data, information and knowledge is essential for informing the scientific community and future macular disease research. Over the past 13 years, the 29 researchers we have funded have had their work published in 100 articles in leading scientific journals, internationally. This is more than the average number of publications for a research grant.

MDFA is committed to supporting Australian researchers to undertake scientific and medical research to unlock new discoveries about the causes of and treatments for macular disease.

Making scientific advancements towards saving sight

MDFA funded Professor Damien Harkin's research into a new way of repairing the retinas of people with AMD. The late stages of AMD can cause damage and scarring to the retina, which leads to vision loss.

Professor Harkin and his team evaluated the use of proteins derived from silk to use as a potential scaffold for repairing the retina. Through this work, the team unexpectedly discovered a new type of cell which they proposed might contribute to the retinal scarring observed in people with AMD.

The significant scientific advancements made by Professor Harkin following his MDFA grant have been shared widely in the scientific community, informing both current and future research. Along with his work being published in peer-reviewed journals, Australia's next generation of researchers will also benefit from the textbook he co-authored about the future direction of biomaterials and regenerative medicine.

Driving research to better understand macular disease

Following on from her work with Professor Damien Harkin, emerging leader Dr Audra Shadforth was awarded MDFA funding to carry out a project investigating the new type of cell that the team had previously discovered, and its potential role in the development of macular damage that causes vision loss in AMD.

Progression in both forms of AMD (neovascular/wet AMD and dry AMD or geographic atrophy), can cause scarring of the macula, and if left untreated, can lead to progressive vision loss over time.

Current treatments for neovascular (wet) AMD (anti-VEGF eye injections) work by reducing fluid build-up within and under the retina, to help stabilise and maintain vision, but the injections themselves can sometimes cause scarring under the macula, distorting it, further reducing vision. There are currently no treatments available in Australia for dry AMD. Eager to learn more about this neglected area of research, Dr Shadforth and her team have applied knowledge about how wounds heal and why scars form in human tissues like skin, to investigate how and why scar tissue forms under the macula, and how this might be prevented.

Working with researchers from the Queensland University of Technology, the University of Queensland and the Queensland Eye Institute, Dr Shadforth is hoping this unique and important project will lead to a better understanding of how to heal macular tissue in people with AMD, without scars forming.

> **"My hope is that our research will lead to new treatments to reduce scarring of the macula in AMD patients."**
>
> **– Dr Shadforth**

Building the next generation of researchers

Creating opportunities for Australia's rising stars in macular disease research is a responsibility MDFA takes very seriously.

We have invested in a wide range of research projects that have helped inspire, upskill and open doors for our country's future scientific leaders in eye health.

Through strategic investment in our research community, we provide opportunities to strengthen the skills and capabilities of researchers and the institutions they work for. By doing this, we are future-proofing quality and robust research into macular disease in Australia, which could save your children's or grandchildren's sight.

100 research publications have been generated by MDFA funded researchers

100% of our funded researchers presented their findings to the scientific community

Over 50% of researchers reported innovative dissemination of findings (e.g. across social media, radio and TV interviews, and Alumni magazines)

FIGHT FOR SIGHT

Add your strength to the fight for sight. Invest in today's researchers for a brighter tomorrow.

Identifying people at high risk of AMD progression

In 2011, Professor Guymer AM received funding from MDFA for her research into how to identify people at high risk of progressing from early to late stages of AMD.

As a result of her work, new state-of-the-art techniques are now being used by eye health professionals to monitor people with AMD more closely, so that vision-threatening complications are identified earlier.

Professor Guymer and her team are also focused on finding treatments for the dry form of late AMD (geographic atrophy), and for the earlier stages of AMD, which still have no available treatments or cures.

Professor Guymer is an eminent figure in Australian and international AMD research. Her MDFA-funded research has contributed to a body of work that has earned her a string of prestigious awards, including Member of the Order of Australia, as well as fellowships and research grant awards from Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

> **"Despite one in seven Australians over 50 showing signs of age-related macular degeneration, it's still difficult to pick up cases of AMD in its earliest stages. Our MDFA-funded research is helping solve these problems."**
>
> **– Professor Robyn Guymer AM**

Inspiring the next generation of researchers

Associate Professor Zhichao Wu undertook doctoral research under the supervision of Professor Guymer in 2012-14 at the University of Melbourne, for which he was awarded the Dean's Award for Excellence.

An optometrist and clinical researcher, Associate Professor Wu is himself a recipient of an MDFA research grant to investigate new ways of using imaging techniques, such as optical coherence tomography (OCT), together with computer technology, to find early signs in the eye of the progression to later stages of AMD, such as neovascular AMD.

This will help to transform how we identify those at highest risk of vision loss.

Investing in early career researchers

Faye Grant's legacy gift is providing MDFA the opportunity to support some of Australia's rising stars in the research world.

Early career researchers often find it difficult to secure funding through the traditional government channels, that's why the Grant Family Fund is so important. This generous gift offers young researchers an opportunity to fund their novel ideas which we hope leads to more funding and support.

When Faye passed away in 2019, her generosity of spirit lived on through a gift in her will to support MDFA's research program. Today, Faye's bequest is funding innovative research into macular disease through the Grant Family Fund, established in memory of Faye and Ronald.

The fund has become a key part of MDFA's research program, offering research grants of up to $50,000 per project to support early career researchers for medium-scale initiatives that show potential for future funding.

FIGHT FOR SIGHT

A gift to the MDFA research program is a promise to keep fighting for sight.

Making Australian lives better

Too many people are facing vision loss or going blind because of macular disease. Until we find a cure, many more people will face the same fate.

Converting the ground-breaking scientific knowledge and discoveries generated by MDFA-funded research into practical applications for people with macular disease is our greatest priority.

The researchers we work with produce data and evidence that informs government policies and decision-making as well as guiding improvements to clinical practice.

With more funding, we could have an even greater impact on finding new ways to help prevent or slow the progress of macular disease and help support people to live well with it.

It's not just older Australians who are impacted by macular disease – children are too

In 2017, Associate Professor Fred Chen received an MDFA grant to study Stargardt disease in more than 100 patients in his dedicated clinic at the Lions Eye Institute.

Stargardt disease is the most common form of macular disease that affects young people. There is no treatment. Children with Stargardt disease start experiencing symptoms when they are between 6 and 12 years old. However, the correct diagnosis is often not made until years later.

With our funding, Associate Professor Chen collected information from a large number of people living with Stargardt disease, which was then used to develop guidelines to support eye health professionals to diagnose and manage these children. This has also been important to help families who may need genetic counselling to confirm a diagnosis and understand the implications for other family members.

The findings from this research, alongside collaborations with the Australian Inherited Retinal Diseases Registry, Genetic Services of Western Australia and Murdoch University, have resulted in more people diagnosed with Stargardt disease receiving appropriate genetic testing, counselling and support.

Following Associate Professor Chen's project, Lions Eye Institute was chosen as a clinical trial site for a new treatment for Stargardt disease in Australia.

Associate Professor Chen's team was awarded further research grants from the NHMRC and another Foundation to continue this important work, which gives hope for an effective treatment in the future. Associate Professor Chen has extensive national and international research collaborations, is the author of textbook chapters, and journal articles, and presents regularly at national and international conferences.

"My one wish as an ophthalmologist and researcher in macular disease is that one day I can tell my patients, who are affected by whatever form of macular degeneration, that we have the treatment to prevent them from going blind or to restore their vision."

– Associate Professor Fred Chen

Improving macular disease care

Driving improved access to eye health care and treatment for everyone – wherever they live in Australia – is a huge motivation behind why we fund research.

We have invested in research projects that focus on finding better ways to deliver healthcare and promote equity, particularly for people living in regional or remote areas of Australia, where access to regular eye care is often limited or unavailable.

Supporting eye healthcare in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Professor Alex Brown received an MDFA Grant for his Defining the Risk and Epidemiology of Aboriginal Australian Macular Disease (DREAM) project.

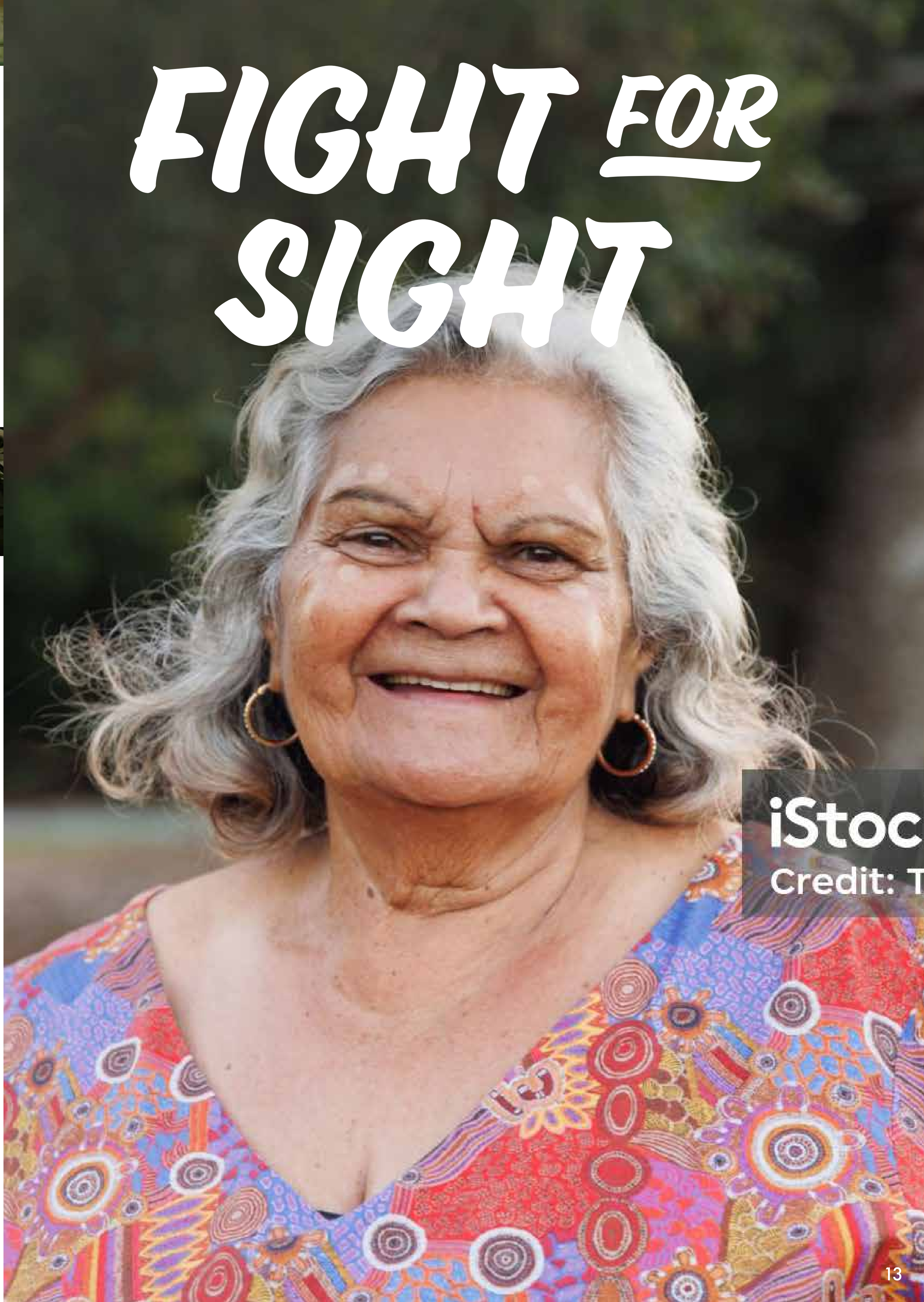
Diabetes can damage the eye's small blood vessels, causing fluid leakage at the macula, leading to vision loss if left untreated. Diabetes-related vision loss is estimated to be about five times more common among Indigenous Australians compared to other Australians.

Professor Brown and his team followed people with diabetes for up to five years. The study found that more than a third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with diabetes had diabetic retinopathy. Men, and people living in remote areas, were particularly at risk. They also found that the key risk factors for developing sight-threatening diabetic macular oedema were high blood glucose levels, kidney problems, and high blood pressure.

The researchers developed a new photographic method for diagnosing eye conditions remotely, creating a valuable eye screening tool that can be used in people living in remote regions with limited access to eye care services. The research also found a need to address not just the known health risks of diabetes, but also the broader social impacts on health.

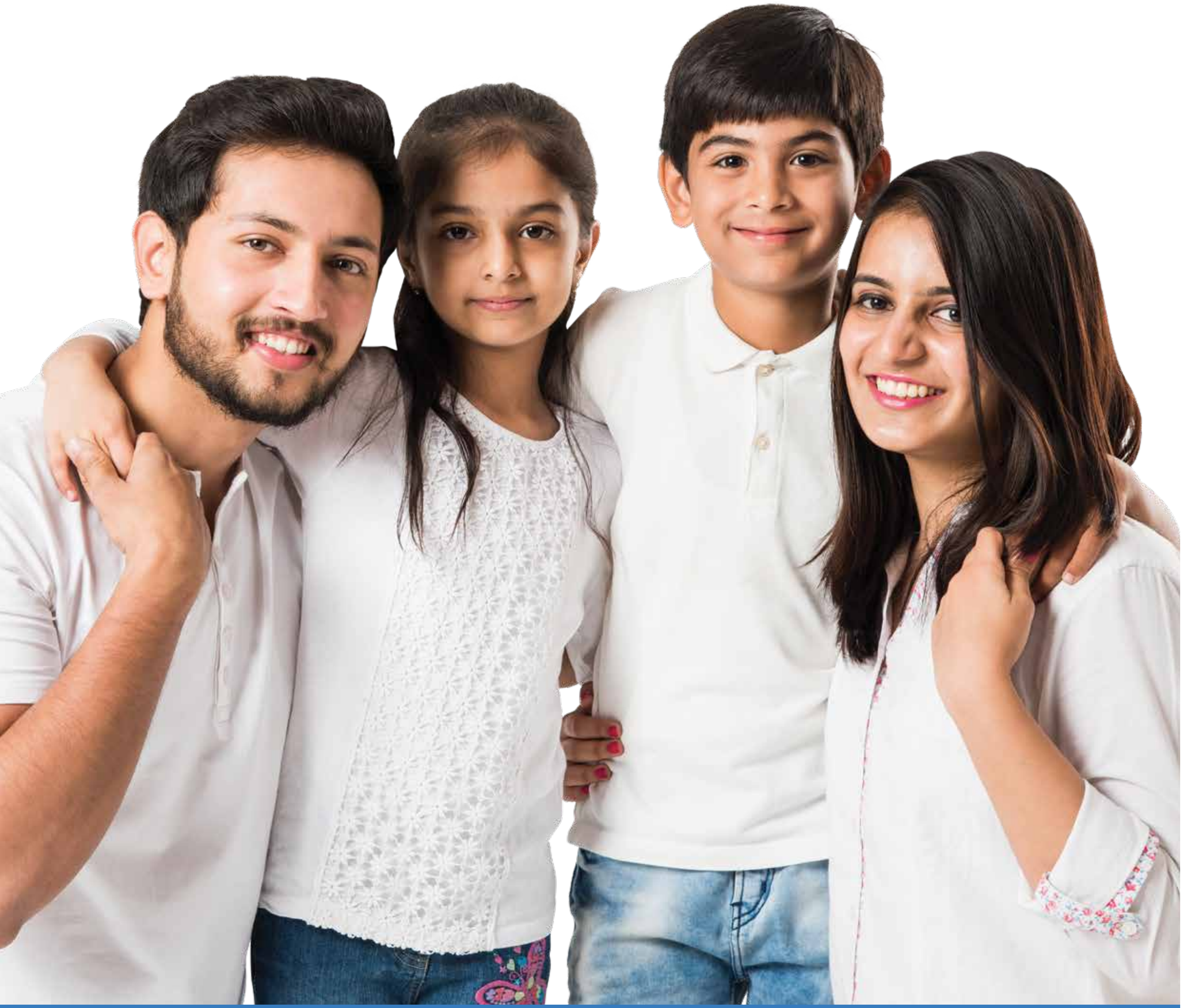
The DREAM project will become a foundation for future strategies to enhance eye health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

> **"I hope these findings will help develop better prevention and treatment strategies for Indigenous communities in Australia and around the world."**
>
> **– Professor Alex Brown**



With your help, we have invested more than $5.9 million into groundbreaking Australian research. Some areas of investment include:

- Global expansion of a world-leading registry of data on neovascular AMD treatment.
- Development of new clinical tools and protocols for optometrists to better characterise and monitor the progression of AMD.
- Development of educational programs for student eye health professionals focused on diagnosing and treating AMD.



FIGHT FOR SIGHT

Create the future you want to see.
Join us in the fight for sight.

Supporting a world-leading registry of macular disease treatment data

Professor Mark Gillies is a Professor of the Faculty of Medicine and Health, Clinical Ophthalmology and Eye Health and the Save Sight Institute, and he directs the Macula Research Group at the University of Sydney.

In 2015, Professor Gillies received an MDFA Research Grant to support the Fight Retinal Blindness! patient registry, established in 2008, which collects high-quality information about the long-term effectiveness and safety of existing and new eye injection treatments for AMD (both wet/neovascular AMD and dry AMD/geographic atrophy), as well as other macular diseases (such as diabetic macular oedema and retinal vein occlusion).

Our grant enabled Professor Gillies to expand this registry around the globe. It has become one of the world's leading registries collecting macular disease treatment results and has set international benchmarks for how the best treatment outcomes for neovascular AMD can be achieved in clinical practice.

The Fight Retinal Blindness! patient registry now gathers data from more than 150 eye health professionals spanning 20 countries across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific – including 50 in Australia.

Professor Gillies uses the data to analyse the factors that make treatment more effective, including identifying the best treatment for specific patients and charting their response to anti-VEGF (anti vascular endothelial growth factor) injections. This helps the clinicians compare their performance to other practitioners and understand what works best for their patients.

> **"I like the idea that if you can do something which improves outcomes, you can help potentially millions of people."**
>
> **– Professor Mark Gillies**

$1.2 million invested in research to improve eye health care delivery to people living with macular disease, including:

- Innovations in diagnosis, management and support related to Stargardt disease and neovascular AMD.
- Improving understanding of nutrition and eating patterns and the risk of age-related macular disease.
- Improving understanding of how best to support the family and caregivers of people with macular disease.
- Conducting clinical and eye health assessments in remote South Australian Aboriginal communities lacking regular eye care.
- Supporting the flagship registry Fight Retinal Blindness! (FRB!) to investigate the safety, effectiveness, and possible adverse effects of treatments for macular disease.

Elisabeth's Legacy

Born in England, Elisabeth Macdonald moved to Armidale in 1969. She lived on acreage outside of town and considered herself a die-hard "bushie", but after her early-stage AMD diagnosis in 2005, and then a wet (neovascular) AMD diagnosis in 2010, Elisabeth decided to move closer to medical support and become a "townie".

Elisabeth knew she was at high risk of developing AMD because her mother had also lived with the condition. This meant she always paid close attention to her vision, so when she developed AMD, it was detected early. She had great success with treatment for her wet AMD, which helped her everyday life.

Being able to continue reading music (as a cellist), and to drive, were intrinsic to Elisabeth's well-being and independence. The owner of labradors including Ronald Macdonald, her beloved reclassified guide dog, Elisabeth maintained a high level of actvity throughout her life, but she was the first to point out that you could never be too proud to ask for help when you live with low vision.

"Not only did I inherit the disease from my mother, but I also inherited her positive attitude in managing the condition. It's not a devastating life sentence. It's a nuisance when you trip up a curb or can't read a sign, but people are only too willing to help".

Elisabeth also understood the importance of supporting others, including researchers.

As a parting gift, Elisabeth has committed a generous donation to MDFA to fund new research that investigates and addresses aspects of vision health and care relevant to people living with macular or retinal diseases in regional and rural areas in Australia.

> **"My hope is that a focus on research in regional and rural areas will lead to better outcomes for people living with macular disease outside of the big cities."**

The new research funding stream will be celebrated as the Elisabeth Macdonald Memorial Award, which will launch in 2025 as part of MDFA's 25th anniversary celebrations.

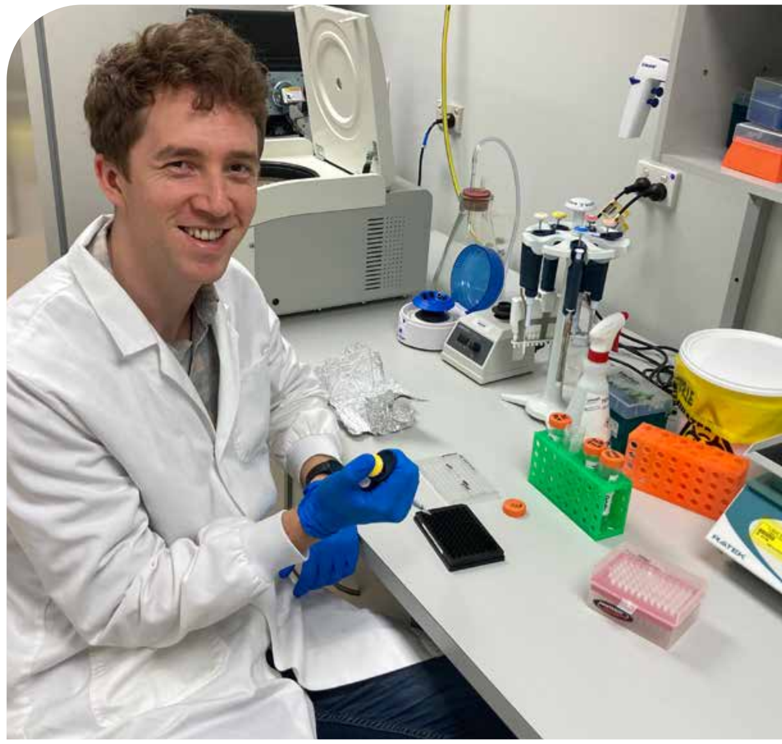
Discovering new treatments

We support researchers across Australia to find new ways to detect, diagnose, treat and cure macular diseases.

Conducting medical research is a lengthy and expensive process, so it is critical that MDFA generates enough money to keep funding the highest quality research into all aspects of macular disease. This will help to keep us on a course towards finding a cure.

While breakthroughs in finding cures may still be on the horizon, every research project we invest in adds to the knowledge and understanding of macular diseases, and the best way to treat them.

Members of our community tell us that, until the day when there are treatments or cures for all macular disease, research gives hope to those who are faced with losing their vision to macular disease.



Using stem cells to develop treatments for macular diseases

The lack of animal models that faithfully replicate the human retina is one of the factors that has hampered researchers studying macular disease and the development of new treatments. Associate Professor Anai Gonzalez-Cordero is hoping to change that, by creating an eye organoid – essentially a mini eye in a dish.

Associate Professor Gonzalez-Cordero believes a macula-containing organoid would be a more accurate laboratory model for macular diseases, enabling scientists to test the effectiveness of potential treatments. Importantly, cells taken from macular organoids grown in the lab could also be used to replace damaged or missing photoreceptor cells in the eye to help reduce sight loss in millions of people.

Her project, funded by MDFA's Grant Family Fund when she was an early career researcher, is making great strides towards the discovery of treatments that can replace missing or damaged retinal cells to reduce sight loss for people with a macular disease.

Associate Professor Gonzalez-Cordero is a leader in the field of stem cells, pioneering this technology in Australia and applying it to the field of eye health research. She heads the Stem Cell Medicine Group and the Stem Cell and Organoid Facility, developing human organoid models for Australian researchers at Children's Medical Research Institute, University of Sydney. Her work in the field has led to numerous awards, including the MetCalf Prize for Stem Cell Research in 2022 and other high impact stem cell-based therapy studies.

Testing new treatments for macular disease

Led by Professor Justine Smith AM, an MDFA-funded project is investigating the potential to use existing medicines for other health conditions to treat macular oedema, the swelling caused by a build-up of fluid in the macula that can lead to vision loss.

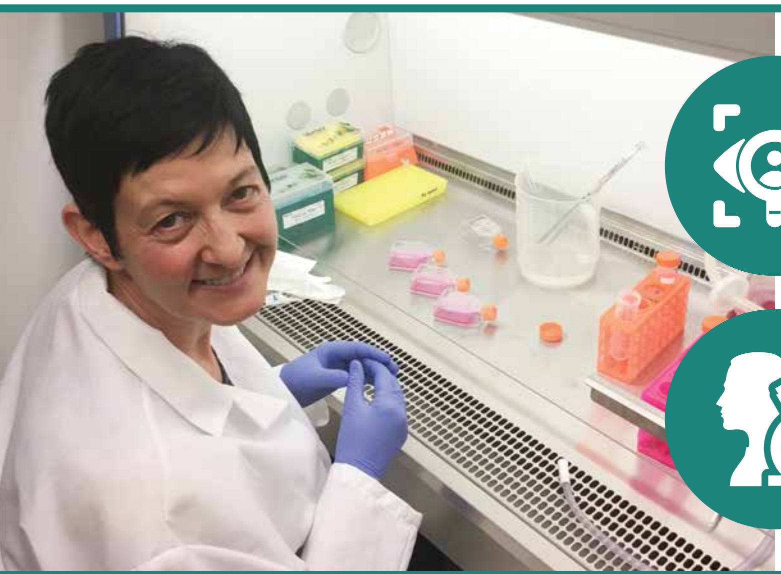
The current treatments for macular oedema are the same anti-VEGF injections delivered directly into the back of the eye that are also used to treat neovascular AMD, or injections with a corticosteroid. However, these treatments have limitations, including lack of effectiveness in some people, and the risk of eye complications due to the injections.

Professor Smith is researching cytokines as a treatment for macular oedema. Cytokines are small proteins that are important for sending signals between cells, especially in the immune system. These cytokines also help regulate inflammation in the body. But cytokines can also disrupt the natural mechanisms that move fluid away from the retina, which can cause fluid build-up at the macula.

Professor Smith and her team are using human eye cells to create eye disease models in the laboratory to explore the effect of blocking the actions of cytokines, to prevent fluid buildup at the macula.

Treatments that block cytokines are already prescribed for other diseases. Professor Smith is hoping to use one of these to help treat macular oedema. The team have identified a cytokine called Interleukin 1ß (IL-1ß) that could be important in macular oedema, and blocking its action could be useful in treating macular oedema.

Following the initial support she received from MDFA for this ground-breaking project, Professor Smith was awarded a prestigious NHMRC Investigator Grant. The new grant will support her team to continue their research towards finding new candidates for a treatment for macular oedema, which in turn could help provide the pharmaceutical industry with new avenues to explore in the treatment development pipeline.



MDFA has invested $2.25 million to discover new and groundbreaking treatments for macular disease.

50% of MDFA-funded Lead Researchers were awarded follow-on funding and achieved further grant success directly linked to their MDFA-funded research.

FIGHT FOR SIGHT

Investing in research, however large or small, will help us find the best way to fight for sight.

FIGHT FOR SIGHT

90%
of researchers reported supervision of at least one Masters or PhD student associated with a MDFA-funded research project

20%
of researchers we funded were rising stars with less than five years' experience

MDFA has invested
$689,000
to support our next generation of researchers

64%
of the researchers we funded are women

80%
of researchers reported a promotion or fellowship awarded as direct output from the MDFA-funded research

Macular Disease Foundation commissioned research

In addition to funding academic researchers and their research projects, MDFA also commissions and undertakes its own research to expand the evidence base on macular disease and its management. This important work includes:

Driving health system and policy changes to improve the access and affordability of treatment for people with macular disease.

Our economic modelling and *Investing to Save Sight: Health and Economic Benefits of Improving Macular Disease Treatment Persistence* report helped convince the Australian Government not to cut the Medicare rebate for eye injections. This report showed that 47,000 people would lose their sight over five years if the Australian Government went ahead with a cut to the Medicare care rebate. This was an important and life-changing win for people having eye injections.

Understanding the impact of macular disease on people's lives.

MDFA's Social Impact Surveys are undertaken every two years in partnership with researchers at the Optometry and Vision Science Research Group at University of New South Wales, Sydney.

Approximately 2,000 people living with macular disease participate in the survey, which provides us with a deep understanding of how MDFA can improve our support for them and ensure our advocacy efforts are tackling the issues that matter the most.

Evaluating our educational programs and services so we are always providing quality support. As the peak body for the macular disease community in Australia, it is essential that we regularly evaluate the effectiveness and rigour of our programs and services. This includes our newly launched Eye Connect patient support service – Australia's first comprehensive community support program for people living with macular disease.

Raising awareness of macular disease and the need for Australians to maintain good eye health.

Every May during Macula Month, MDFA commissions a Galaxy Poll, which is conducted to support our awareness raising activities.

The Galaxy Poll allows us to understand the general population's awareness and understanding of macular disease, including the risks and symptoms of AMD and diabetic eye disease.

Since our first Galaxy Poll in 2011, awareness of AMD has improved from 1 in 3 Australians over the age of 50 year to 2 in 3 people in this at-risk population.

Education and improved health literacy of this disease in essential for early detection and prevention.

The Fitzpatrick Sykes Family Foundation

Research that makes a real impact on people and improves their lives doesn't just happen in the laboratory.

Social impact studies and economic modelling research assist MDFA to advocate to government with persuasive evidence to ensure policies like the Medicare Benefits Scheme don't disadvantage people needing treatment for their macular disease.

Having seen the firsthand impacts of AMD, the Fitzpatrick Sykes Family Foundation has been generously supporting MDFA to conduct targeted, policy-relevant research since 2019. This forward-thinking approach has seen the foundation provide the initial funding for our Social Impact series.

The Fitzpatrick Sykes Family Foundation also helped MDFA with one of our most significant advocacy wins. MDFA was able to commission an economic modelling report on the impact of the government's proposed change to reduce the Medicare rebate for intravitreal eye injection.

This research helped convince the Australian Government not to cut the rebate, as the extra cost in treatment would see an additional 47,000 people go needlessly blind over a five-year period.

Like the Fitzpatrick Sykes Family Foundation, your donation will help enable MDFA to equip national decision makers with the best information so they can make the best decisions for people living with macular disease.

Credit: jasonbennee

There is no cure, but there is you.

More than 1.9 million Australians have signs of macular disease.

As the impact of vision loss and blindness increases, we are dedicated to creating a future where everyone's sight is safe. Meet the talented people who fight for sight every day.

Will you help us invest in the next groundbreaking researcher?


Dr Carla Abbott


Professor Chandra Balaratnasingam


Dr Alexis "CeeCee" Britten-Jones


Professor Alex Brown


Associate Professor Fred Chen


Associate Professor Anai Gonzalez-Cordeo


Professor Laura Downie


Professor Erica Fletcher


Professor Mark Gillies


Professor Bamini Gopinath


Professor Robyn Guymer AM


Dr Xavier Hadoux


Professor Damien Harkin


Associate Professor Wilson Heriot


Professor Isabelle Jalbert


Professor Steven Krilis

Visionary thinking. Revolutionary research.


Dr Sheela Kumaran


Clinical Associate Professor Gerald Liew


Associate Professor Chi Luu


Professor Paul Mitchell AO


Professor Alice Pebay


Dr Liubov Robman


Dr Audra Shadforth


Professor Matthew Simunovic


Professor Justine Smith AM


Dr Diana Tang


Dr Yvette Wooff


Associate Professor Zhichao Wu


Dr Ting Zhang

Until we protect all Australians from macular disease, we will fight for sight.

Help us to achieve this vision.

Macular
Disease
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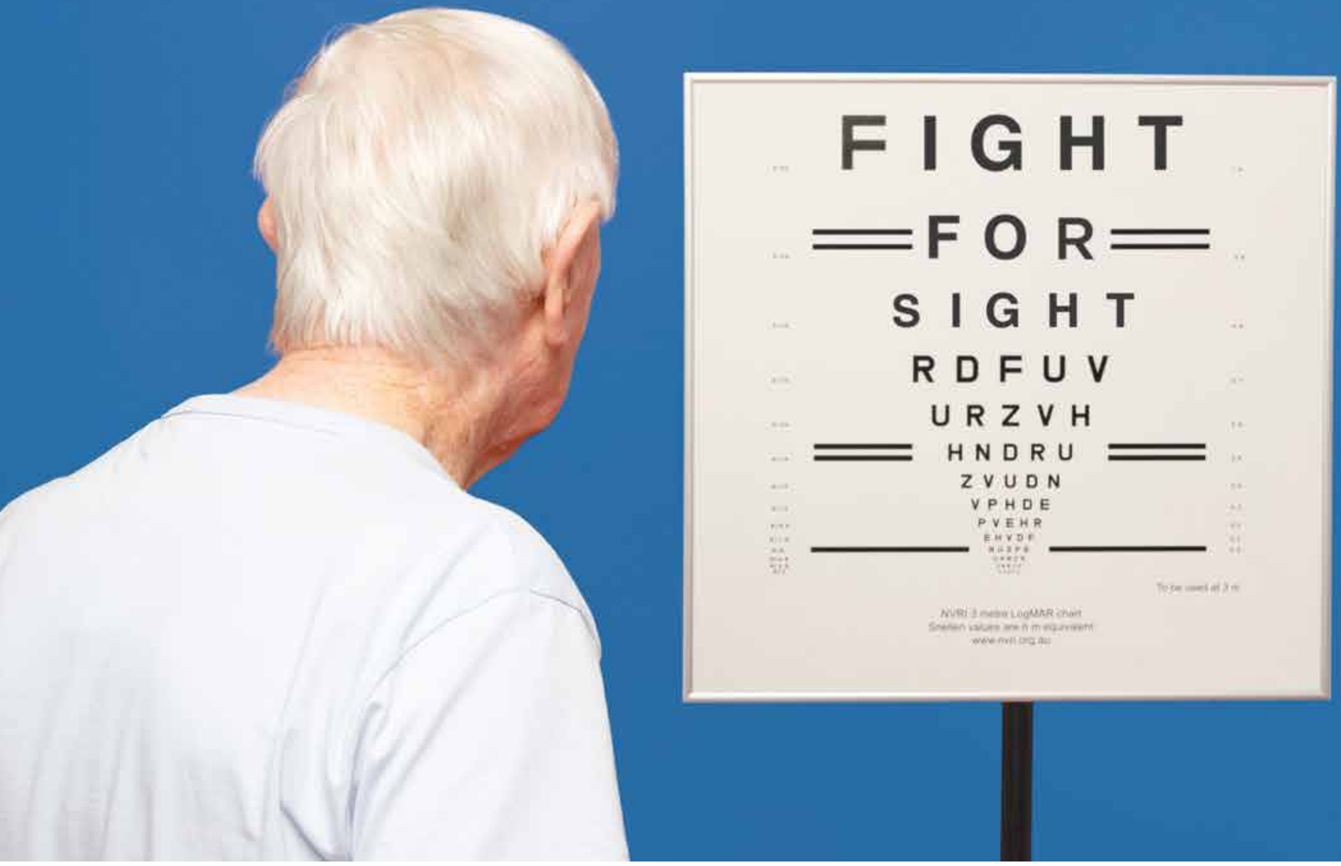
AUSTRALIA

Together we can make the difference



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2024