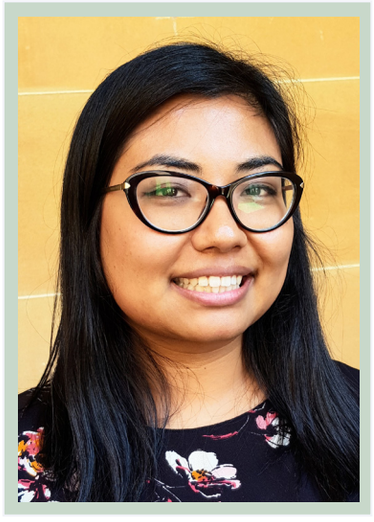
MEET THE NEW CLINICAL RESEARCH UNIT

As the number of clinical trials we are involved in increases, so does our clinical research unit! Take a moment to get to know some of our new team members.

Clara Wongso, Clinical Research Orthoptist

Hi, I am the newest member to the Macula Research Group. Research is very new to me, but it is something that I have found to be very rewarding and enjoyable. I work with a great bunch of people who are all very passionate and enjoy what they do. I am excited and can't wait to see what the future holds for the Macula Research Group. I am glad that I will be a part of it.

So far, there has never been a dull day. I enjoy accompanying patients through their study visits and hearing about the positive changes they have experienced. This is something I don't always get when working in a normal clinic. Clinical research and clinical trials is important to ensure the saftey and efficacy of new medicines. Not only will we hope to improve our patient's vision, we hope to also improve their everyday living.



Liza Shilpakar, Clinical Research Nurse

As a clinical research nurse, I organise, oversee and assist in clinical trials related procedures. Work can be extremely busy with several trials running at the same time. An average working day involves assessing patients to see if they are suitable for our current trials, talking to patients and their family to make sure they completely understand what each study involves and supporting the patient in their decision to take part in the trial.

Working in research has taught me to be attentive to fine details. This role has also allowed me to practise a wide range of skills which I would not routinely perform as a nurse. It feels great to work with with a team who shares the same passion and it is a priviliedge a priviliedge to be part of the Macula Research Group, an internationally certified clinical trials unit that conducts randomised clinical trials in macula and retinal diseases.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation or discuss leaving a bequest to support macular research please visit our website www.sydney.edu.au/medicine/eye, call us on (02) 9382 7309 or post a cheque to Save Sight Institute, South Block, Sydney Eye Hospital made out to 'The University of Sydney'

Save Sight Institute is a centre of The University of Sydney.

SAVE SIGHT INSTITUTE

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

MacularNEWS

Autumn 2019 : Edition 18

Diabetic Macular Oedema

Diabetic Macular Oedema (DMO) refers to swelling of the centre of the macula that is caused by damage to the retinal blood vessels by high blood sugar levels. It is the commonest cause of impaired vision in working aged Australians. Injections of drugs that inhibit "vascular endothelial growth factor" (VEGF) are generally the "first line" treatment for DMO if it starts to affect vision. DMO does not, however, fully resolve in many eyes on VEGF inhibitors. Clear guidelines on how to treat these poorly responsive eyes have not been agreed upon.

The Macula Research Group have made significant contributions in this area over the years. Keep reading this issue to find out more.

Director's Message

The 2019 Autumn edition outlines current activities covered by our clinical research unit. We are also very excited to share that our site was recipient of the 2018 Syneos Health Site Appreciation Award, one of three awards given to sites selected globally. We remain very grateful to every patient who considers participating in a clinical trial or research study.

Thank you for your support.

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MACULA RESEARCH UNIT UPDATES

SwitchDMO Clinical Trial

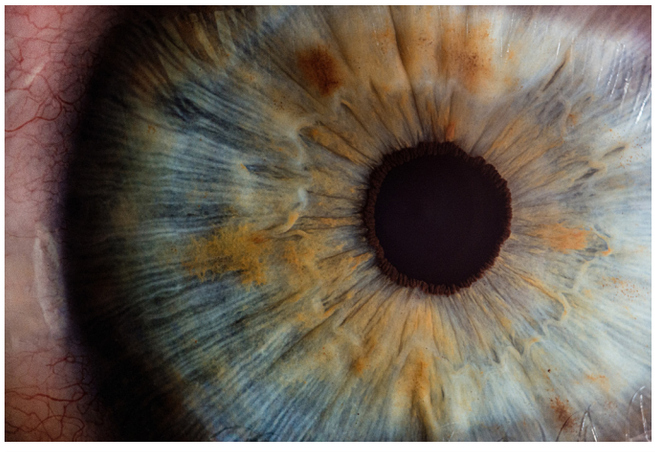
We designed The SWITCHDMO study to address this issue. It was a small prospective study that assessed whether there was any benefit in switching poor responders to the VEGF inhibitor, bevacizumab (Avastin, Roche), to the steroid, dexamethasone, which has been made for the eye as an injectable implant (Ozurdex, Allergan). Patients who had persistent DMO despite treatment with bevacizumab for at least 6 months were enrolled at 2 Australian public hospital clinics. There was still significant reduction in diabetic macular oedema after switching to the dexamethasone implant (with an average reduction of macular thickness of 220 microns [this is a lot] and resolution of DMO in most) despite the long period of anti-VEGF treatment. More than half the patients gained an extra line of vision on an eye chart. This study has improved our treatment of these eyes resulting in better patient outcomes and provided a significant contribution to the international debate on this subject.

NEW CLINICAL TRIALS

Our clinical research unit has broadened to participate in clinical trials researching a wide range of ocular disease.

DRY EYES AND VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS

The meibomian glands located within the top and bottom eyelids are responsible for producing an oily substance which prevents tears from evaporating too quickly. Poor secretion of this oily substance is one of many reasons why some people have dry eyes. Viral conjunctivitis is a highly contagious condition. Management of this condition is also limited.



HEREDITARY RETINAL CONDITION & CO-LOUR BLINDNESS

It is estimated that 1 in 1500 poeple have some sort of inherited retinal disease. The natural history of these hereditary retinal conditions has been poorly documented. This includes how it affects the participant's field of vision, colour perception and light/dark sensitivity.

If you (or someone you know) have any of the above conditions and/or are interested in any of our current clinical trials, please contact the Clinical Trials Unit on 9382 7309

MORE THAN JUST A FELLOWSHIP

Dr Elisa Cornish (Medical Retina Fellow)

Dr Elisa Cornish has been passionate about retinal research since her PhD as a young scientist before she began training in Ophthalmology. Her fellowship at the Sydney Eye Hospital/ the Save Sight institute, supported by Bayer, has allowed her to continue this interest while receiving advanced training in the management of retinal disease.

Elisa worked under the guidance of Associate Professor Samantha Fraser-Bell and Professor Mark Gillies on a number of ongoing clinical trials of new treatments for retinal disease over the course of her fellowship. This involved recruiting and examining trial patients and administering treatments.

She presented findings of the first analysis of what happened 5 years later to eyes that received steroid implants for diabetic retinopathy in research papers and presentations at national and international conferences. She is also performing the first 5-year analysis of outcomes of second-affected eyes with wet macular degeneration using a national database established at the Save Sight Institute with which readers of this Newsletter will be familiar: The Fight Retinal Blindness! Project.

Her fellowship has also enabled Elisa to gain subspecialty expertise in managing medical retinal and inflammatory eye conditions. These include the most common causes of visual impairment and blindness in Australia: age related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, inherited retinal dystrophies, and retinal vein occlusion.

This fellowship has provided Elisa with a solid foundation to continue her career in research aimed at finding better treatments to reduce blindness from retinal conditions.

2018 SITE APPRECIATION AWARD

Macula Research Group/Save Sight Institute was recipient of the 2018 Site Appreciation Award presented by Syneous Health, a major international Contract Research Organisation.

Our site was recognised for collection of high quality, reliable data, excellent focus on patient saftey and appropriate patient oversight by staff and doctors. Our site demonstrated strong collaborative teamwork and communication.

From left to right: Stella Xu (Research Orthoptist), Haipha Ali (Research Orthoptist), Kathleen Agorto (Research Orthoptist), Stephanie Oeben (Associate Project Director, Syneos Health), Associate Professor Samantha Fraser-Bell (Principle Investigator MRG), Maria Williams (MRG CRU Manager), Kaliane Galdino (Senior Clinical Research Associate, Syneos Health), Liza Shilpakar (Research Nurse), Winnie Zhang (Research Orthoptist), Sharon McKenzie (Research Nurse).