

**Sight Loss Services, Inc.  
Cape Cod and Islands  
The CandleLight Newsletter  
January 2025**

**“With the new year comes a refueled motivation to improve on the past one.”**

**- Gretchen Bleiler**

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**Thyroid Eye Disease**

**Vanderbilt Eye Institute orbital disease specialists are pioneering research to improve treatments for thyroid eye disease (TED), also known as Graves’ disease. An autoimmune condition, also known as Graves’ orbitopathy, can occur alongside TED but also may occur independently. Treatment options for TED have been limited, but the pace of discovery is advancing. “This is an exciting time to be treating this disease,” said co-investigator Rachel Sobel, M.D. “As we better understand the underlying biology of thyroid eye disease, we’re able to take a more targeted approach to treatment. Some drugs, like satralizumab, were approved for treating other autoimmune conditions, and**

**some are being newly created in the lab.”** Thyroid eye disease develops when imbalanced hormone production from the thyroid gland triggers an inflammatory attack on muscles and tissues surrounding the eye. A bulging eye, or proptosis, is a common visible symptom, causing disfigurement and visual disability. Now, VEI has joined a global group of leading eye-research centers to investigate satralizumab, a newer and potentially more advantageous treatment. This drug targets interleukin-6, an inflammatory chemical or cytokine, which surges in the bloodstream with many autoimmune diseases. “A self-administered medication like satralizumab is going to decrease the burden on patients and their families to be able to get treatment,” said Behin Barahimi, M.D., who is assisting with the study, along with nurse coordinator Tracy Powell. The SatraGO-2 trial is one of two phase III studies sponsored by drug manufacturer Genentech investigating satralizumab. The research will test the drug’s ability to significantly reduce proptosis associated with thyroid eye disease.

**AMD Stem Cell News**

**The first patients to receive a new treatment derived from stem cells for people with wet age-related macular degeneration have regained reading vision. The two patients who underwent the procedure, a woman in her early 60s and a man in his 80s, had wet AMD and declining vision. The results, published in Nature Biotech, described the implantation of a specially engineered patch of retinal pigment epithelium cells derived from stem cells to treat people with sudden severe sight loss from wet AMD. It is hoped that it will also help treat dry AMD in the future.**

**The study is a major milestone for the London Project to Cure Blindness, a partnership between Professor Pete Coffey from University College London and Professor Lyndon da Cruz, a retinal surgeon at Moorfields Eye Hospital. The patients were monitored for 12 months and reported improvements to vision. They went from not being able to read at all even with glasses, to reading 60-80 words per minute with reading glasses.**

**Professor Pete Coffey, UCL Institute of Ophthalmology said: “This study represents**

**real progress in regenerative medicine and opens the door to new treatment options for people with AMD. We hope this will lead to an affordable ‘off-the-shelf’ therapy that could be made available to NHS patients within the next five years.”**

**Patients regain sight after being first to receive retinal tissue engineered from stem cells – The World Association of Eye Hospitals (waeh.org)**

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**New Gene Therapy for Retinitis Pigmentosa**

**New research presented at AAO 2024, the 128th annual meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, suggests that a new kind of gene therapy can improve vision in people who have lost nearly all sight to retinitis pigmentosa. While not all patients enrolled in the study responded to treatment, up to 50 percent gained three lines of vision on a standard eye chart. Researchers believe the treatment could also help patients suffering from other types of retinal degeneration “We are finally on the brink of an impactful therapy for people with severe vision loss,” said lead researcher Allen C. Ho, MD, director of Retina Research and co-director of the Retina Service of Wills Eye Hospital. “These**

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**findings finally deliver hope to patients and ophthalmologists that something is close to being able to help them. Nanoscope Therapeutics, expects to initiate an application submission with the FDA early in 2025. “We are diligently working to get MCO-010 in the hands of ophthalmologists to treat patients as soon as possible,” said Dr. Ho, who also serves as Nanoscope’s Chief Medical Advisor. “We are also aligned with FDA on a phase 3 trial design evaluating MCO-010 in Stargardt macular degeneration”**

**New Gene Therapy for Retinitis Pigmentosa Shows Promise - American Academy of Ophthalmology (aao.org)**

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### **Sight Loss Services Donations**

**Sight Loss Services, Inc. does not charge for the services it provides for those with vision loss. We do, however, rely on the generosity of people donating to keep our non-profit 501c organization going. Will you help to support us? If so, please make your check payable to “Sight Loss Services, Inc.” and mail to 900 Route 134, Unit 3-25, South Dennis, MA 02660.**

**Thank you for your support!**

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**Living Fully with Vision Loss. Learn from each other by sharing ideas, tips and experiences. With Carla Burke at the Brooks Free Library, 739 Main Street in Harwich. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month from 1:00pm – 2:30pm beginning in March of 2025. Light Refreshments and volunteers to provide assistance for those not accompanied by a friend or family member. Space is limited. Registration begins January 21<sup>st</sup>. Call or email Carla Burke to register. 508-310-4429 or [cburke@clamsnet.org](mailto:cburke@clamsnet.org). Non Harwich residents who wish to attend and need transportation, please contact Sight Loss Services at 508-394-3904 to check on availability of transportation services.**

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**Whelden Memorial Library Program**

**Please join us on Monday, January 13<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm for a presentation by Sight Loss Services Executive Director, Rhonda Garran. We will go over the services that are available and have a number of small adaptive aids on hand to demonstrate. The library is located at 2401 Meetinghouse Way in West Barnstable.**

**Winter Weather**

**The Sight Loss Services office follows weather related delays and closures of the Dennis Yarmouth School System. The individual support groups follow weather related delays and closures of the individual towns they are located in. If in doubt, please call the office at 508-394-3904. Although the office may be closed, we can still receive calls through our cell phones at home.**

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**The Audible Local Ledger is a radio reading network for the blind, visually impaired and print disabled, serving Cape Cod and the Islands and Southeastern Massachusetts. They provide readings of daily and weekly newspapers, periodicals, shopping guides, books, calendars and community events. Listen live on ZENO, through the Sero app, by phone, through their website or through Alexa powered speakers such as Echo Dot. Please contact the Audible Local Ledger at 508-539-2030 or visit their website [audiblelocalledger.org](http://audiblelocalledger.org) for more information.**

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