



## Looking to 2019 and beyond

We are all hoping Santa has a cure for AMD in his bag of presents. Even if he disappoints, there is reason to celebrate as researchers advance our understanding of AMD and devise new methods to treat the disease.

The excellent clinical trials website, [www.centerwatch.com](http://www.centerwatch.com), contains information about more than 150 research studies planned or underway for AMD. We've picked out two favorites that we will be watching in 2019, and hoping that the results are positive.

### For Dry AMD

85% of those with AMD suffer from the dry version. Unfortunately, there is no successful treatment, and so patients are encouraged to exercise, avoid smoking, take vitamin supplements, and eat a healthy diet.

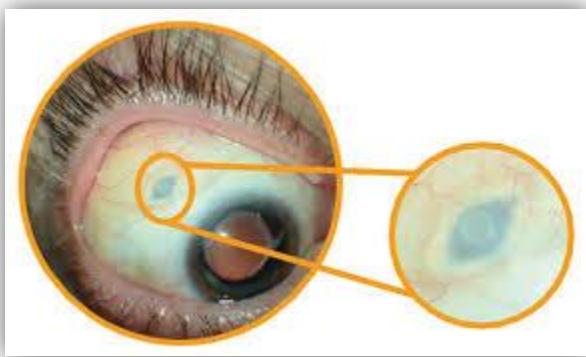
Apellis, a biopharmaceutical company based in Kentucky focuses on inhibiting the complement system, an integral component of the body's immune system. They have drugs in development that concentrates on kidney and blood disease, and have recently completed a phase 2 clinical trial for patients with geographic atrophy (GA) associated with dry AMD. The peptide in their drug **APL-2** binds to complement 3, blocking activation of the pathway, and stopping the formation of drusen.

Study subjects received intravitreal injections once every 4 or 8 weeks – similar to the injections received by those with wet AMD - and the results showed a reduction in the area of GA lesions. A new study that will enroll 600 participants is now recruiting subjects in several locations. Apellis may have preliminary data to share in 2021.

### **For Wet AMD**

Some companies are testing drug combinations that offer increased protection against neovascularization; others are investigating sophisticated technology that bypasses defunct retinal cells. The wet AMD device that we are following with great interest is Genentech's **Port Delivery System (PDS)**. Genentech has been a major contributor in vision research having developed Avastin and Lucentis. (Also see *the article in*

*this newsletter about their new anti-VEGF drug.*) The PDS is a small capsule implanted into the sclera (the white part of the eye) that slowly releases medication. Previous clinical trials proved the PDS can extend the time between doctor visits, with 4-5 drug



doses stored in the capsule's reservoir. The ability to perfect a device that slow-releases anti-VEGF medication will reduce the strain on both doctors and patients and will slow the progression of AMD. New clinical trials are underway that will follow 360 patients for two years who have had the PDS device implanted. Initial results will be shared in 2021.