

## **What we can learn from senior Seniors**

If macular degeneration is the leading cause of vision loss among the seniors in the U.S., can we learn anything by looking at the extremely old?

Retina specialists from a large Midwest practice reviewed the medical charts of patients who had at least one ophthalmology office visit after their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday<sup>1</sup>. They were able to identify 62 patients (123 eyes) meeting the criteria. The average age of this group was 102 years old, and the majority were white (n=51; 82%) and female (n=51; 82%). Two thirds of the patients had bilateral wet AMD, and the majority of patients met the legal definition for blindness (n=36, 58%).

**Remarkably, 12 of the 62 patients (19%) retained visual acuity of at least 20/50 in one eye.** The authors speculated that since the study was conducted using patients who visited retina specialists, there was an inherent bias in this study. The only

subjects included in this chart review were patients under the care of retina specialists.

The authors reported that of the 95 eyes had evidence of wet AMD. 86% (n=82) had been treated at with at least one intravitreal injection. The average number of injections these patients had received per eye was 9 (range= 0-49). Since the first anti-VEGF injections were offered in 2005, many of these patients were already 90+ years old when they received their first treatment. These elderly patients have only had the benefit of intravitreal injections for the last decade and yet some have retained useful vision.

These patients have lived through several paradigm shifts in the treatment of macular degeneration; many had been treated with laser photocoagulation and photodynamic therapy, the standard of care in the years prior to intravitreal injections.

While most (77%) of these seniors developed wet AMD as they passed the century mark, nearly a quarter of them have dry AMD symptoms only and 12 of the patients retained useful vision.

The long-term prognosis for patients with AMD will likely continue to improve as the disease is detected earlier and effective treatment is instituted sooner.

1. Stern MS, Mammo DA, et al, **Centenarians With Age-Related Macular Degeneration**, *J Vitreoretin Dis* 1:310-313, 2017.