

# Glaucoma Research Society of Canada News & Information



Vol. 23 No. 1 Spring 2012

*We Support New Ideas*



Glaucoma Research Society of Canada  
**AND UNIQUE LIVES & EXPERIENCES  
ARE PROUD TO OFFER  
A VERY SPECIAL VIP FUNDRAISER**

## AN EVENING WITH JAMIE LEE CURTIS

LIVE & IN-PERSON AT ROY THOMSON HALL IN TORONTO  
MONDAY, MAY 14 AT 7:30PM

FOLLOWED BY A PRIVATE POST RECEPTION WITH  
JAMIE LEE CURTIS TO BENEFIT GRSC.

- Refreshments Served
- Tax Receipt for the Maximum allowable amount
- Tickets limited to the first 60 guests
- Price includes Cost of Admission + Private VIP reception

For VIP tickets call the Roy Thomson Hall Box office at  
(416) 872-4255 and ask for the VIP event with Jamie Lee Curtis

Or visit [www.roythomson.com](http://www.roythomson.com) and search "Jamie Lee Curtis"  
and click VIP tickets.

Prices \$146.50, \$158.50 and \$169.50 including HST.  
\$8.50 box office fee will be added to each ticket.

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[www.uniquelives.com](http://www.uniquelives.com)



## Researchers View Glaucoma as a Neurological Disorder

No longer thinking of glaucoma solely as an eye disease is generating nerve cell-based treatment advances that may ultimately vanquish the disease. Top researchers now view glaucoma as a neurologic disorder that causes nerve cells to degenerate and die, similar to what occurs in Parkinson disease and in Alzheimer's.

For many years, the prevailing theory was that vision damage in glaucoma patients was caused by abnormally high pressure inside the eye. Lowering IOP was the only goal of those developing medications and surgical techniques to treat glaucoma.

New research focuses on the damage that occurs in retinal ganglion cells (RGCs), which are vital to the ability to see. These nerve cells connect the eye to the brain through the optic nerve.

RGC-targeted glaucoma treatments now in clinical trials include:

- medications injected into the eye that deliver survival and growth factors to RGCs;
- medications known to be useful for stroke and Alzheimer's, such as cytidine-5-diphosphocholine; and
- electrical stimulation of RGCs, delivered via tiny electrodes implanted in contact lenses or other external devices.

Human trials of stem cell therapies are in the planning stages.

- *Ophthalmology*, March 2012

**Mark Your Calendars  
Annual General Meeting  
Tuesday, October 16, 2012**

**NOTE NEW LOCATION**

**Estates of Sunnybrook  
2075 Bayview Avenue  
Free above ground parking**

## President's Message



I'm pleased to let members know that this year we received 13 applications for funding research projects. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the applicants and the dedicated

scientists who are currently evaluating the applications. When the evaluations are complete, GRSC's Scientific Advisory Committee, chaired by Dr. Graham Trope, will recommend the awards for research funding to the Board. You will read about the winning research projects in our next newsletter.

Of course, we would not be able to give grants without your donations. I sincerely thank you on behalf of the Board. Please continue to give as generously as you can to support essential research into a disease that is now the second most frequent cause of blindness throughout the world.

### Remember the Society in your will

Glaucoma is most prevalent in people over 50. This is reflected in our membership who at this time of life may be updating their wills. If you are, I urge you to remember the Society in your will. A gift will help sustain our research and provide you with a tax savings of up to 46% of the gift. Please speak to our administrator, Barbara Ullmann, for details.

### Fundraising is our top priority

I am pleased to announce that we have partnered with *Unique Lives & Experiences* to offer a VIP fundraiser evening with Jamie Lee Curtis at Roy Thomson Hall on May 14, 2012. Our sincere thanks to Vice-President Renée Wolf for heading this committee and Director, Dr. Mark Shaffer, for introducing this opportunity to the Board.

Our thanks also to Vice-President Rick Gallop for guiding volunteers, Tanya Atkinson, Chang and Heiyoon Park, Pearl Hoz, Stuart Murray, Jean Thomson and Don Young, in distributing our brochures to ophthalmologists in the GTA.

Please note the date and new location for this year's Annual General Meeting. It is **Tuesday, October 16<sup>th</sup> at the Estates of Sunnybrook, 2075 Bayview Avenue.** (The Conference Centre on the main floor at the CNIB where we usually have our AGM has closed.) I look forward to welcoming everyone at this new location.

– **Martin Chasson, President**

## New Study Suggests Physically Active Lifestyle May Help Protect Your Eyes from Glaucoma

British researchers looked at the association between physical activity and eye pressure in 5,650 men and women aged 48 to 90. Participants were evaluated and their eye pressure tracked between 1993 and 1997 and again between 2006 and 2010.

The study found that moderate physical exercise performed about 15 years previously was associated with a 25% reduction in ocular perfusion pressure (OPP), an important risk factor for glaucoma.

The study's author, Dr. Paul Foster of the University College London Institute of Ophthalmology, said in a press release: "It appears that OPP is largely determined by cardiovascular fitness...there is certainly an association between a sedentary lifestyle and factors which increase glaucoma risk.

Before now, the only modifiable risk factor for glaucoma was IOP, altered by medication, laser or surgery...our study points toward a new way of reducing glaucoma risk, through maintaining an active lifestyle."

– **Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science, October 2011**



## Dr. Rajiv Bindlish Answers Your Questions about Glaucoma

### Can using eye drops for an extended period result in loss of effectiveness and allergic reactions?

Most of the newer drugs do not wear off or lose their effect over time. Many studies with Prostaglandin meds, such as Xalatan, have shown long term effectiveness in stable patients. Beta blocker meds however, such as Timolol, do lose their effect over time.

Some drugs, such as Trusopt or Alphagan, have shown allergic effects of about 20-30% over time. We see less when the drug is used in combination with a beta blocker (Cosopt, Combigan).

With long term use, some preservatives in eye drops may cause red eyes with burning and irritation. Rather than an allergy, this has more to do with tolerability.

In spite of these issues, patients should continue to use eye drops as recommended by their doctors. Medications control glaucoma in more than 90% of patients.

### I was given a generic medication. Is it the same as I was taking before?

Few studies compare a generic medication with its branded counterpart.

Generic medications must contain the same quantity of active ingredient (drug amount) as brand name medications. Fillers however, do not have to be the same. This means generics may have different side effects including burning and allergic reactions.

The bottles can also be different. This may cause confusion with each use. If you switch to a generic medication, I suggest you bring the bottle to your doctor on your next visit.

### Can issues, such as blood pressure, weight, diet, and smoking affect my glaucoma?

There is more of an association of glaucoma worsening with low blood pressure than with high blood pressure. Certain blood pressure medications, such as diuretics (water pills) or calcium channel blockers have been associated with glaucoma worsening, but the data to support this is still limited.

Diet and weight loss do promote overall general well-being and obese people may have higher eye pressure readings.

Smoking has been shown to affect glaucoma surgical outcomes in a negative way and patients are encouraged not to smoke.

### Questions about Glaucoma?

Email your questions to  
[info@glaucomaresearch.ca](mailto:info@glaucomaresearch.ca)  
or call **416-483-0200** **1-877-483-0204**

Dr. Bindlish will answer selected questions in upcoming newsletters.

### Looking for a Unique & Memorable Gift to Mark a Milestone in Life?

Whether it's for a birthday, wedding, graduation, anniversary, bar/bat mitzvah or the passing of a loved one, a donation to the Glaucoma Research Society of Canada is a meaningful and lasting way to express your sentiments.

Your gift funds researchers working to find more effective treatments and a cure for glaucoma.

It's easy to donate over the phone, through our secure website, or by mail. We will send you a tax deductible receipt and a letter acknowledging your gift.

## Eye Donations Needed

Information gathered from eyes with glaucoma can help researchers find a cure for this disease. But eye donations are rare, and donations of eyes with glaucoma, rarer still.

To donate your eyes after death, mail your name, address and phone number, along with that of your next of kin, to:

Linda Sharpen, Eye Bank Manager,  
Eye Bank of Canada (Ontario Division),  
1929 Bayview Ave, Suite 203  
Toronto ON M4G 3E8.

The Eye Bank will contact you with information you can pass on to your family. Your final wishes will be acted upon and the Eye Bank will provide your eyes to researchers.

For more information, visit the Eye Bank of Canada's website at [www.eyebank.med.utoronto.ca](http://www.eyebank.med.utoronto.ca)

## Gifts of Life Insurance

*A powerful way for you to fund research.* Small annual premium payments treated as a charitable tax deduction can create significant gifts in the future.

You can make a gift of an existing policy or purchase a new one naming the Society as owner/beneficiary. Gifts of an existing policy entitle the donor to a fair market value tax receipt, which can be greater than the cash surrender value.

## For Information about GRSC

phone: 416-483-0200

1-877-483-0204

e-mail: [info@glaucomaresearch.ca](mailto:info@glaucomaresearch.ca)

write:

**Glaucoma Research Society of Canada**  
1929 Bayview Avenue, Suite 215E  
Toronto Ontario M4G 3E8

web: [www.glaucomaresearch.ca](http://www.glaucomaresearch.ca)

**The Glaucoma Research Society of Canada is a national registered charity funding research into finding a cure for glaucoma. Since 1988, GRSC has raised over one and a half million dollars for research.** Charitable Registration No 889178695 RR0001

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**Newsletter Editor: Linda Joyce Ott**