

Dear friends and supporters,

Welcome to our Summer newsletter. Several exciting developments have happened since our last one! In preparation for writing this column I have looked at the scientific papers we have published over the last year. Work from our research group, or in collaboration with scientists around the world, has identified a gene which causes both wiggly eyes (nystagmus) and imbalance in children and genes which cause cone dystrophy, retinitis pigmentosa and macular degeneration. The results of this work have been published in very highly regarded scientific journals. It has been a very productive year!



I have just learnt that some of our work has also been accepted for publication in a very prestigious research journal called Nature Genetics. Working with scientists from Iceland, Australia, Hong Kong, China, Sweden and the USA we have contributed to identifying a novel gene for glaucoma. Glaucoma affects over 1 % of the population over the age of forty. Current treatment is focused on lowering intra-ocular pressure within the eye by taking drops or via surgery. Unfortunately this is not effective in all patients. In order to make progress in this disease we need to better understand the basic biological processes which lead to glaucoma and by doing this we can then start to develop better treatments. Our work in helping identify a novel gene and biological pathway for glaucoma is an important step forward in this respect. Previously we have seen how finding genes for macular degeneration is now leading to the development of novel clinical treatments. We expect that this work in glaucoma will eventually have the same result. I am proud that Hampshire patients have contributed to this exciting discovery.

This work also illustrates the 'chicken and egg' world of research we live in. We are no longer allowed to start research projects unless we have funding in place to support the work. However it is unusual to obtain assistance from research 'funders' unless pilot data generated from a research project is up and running. In this 'chicken and egg' situation it is often impossible to initiate novel research and, for example, our glaucoma research which has led to the important discovery detailed above would not have happened under these current rules. This is where the Gift of Sight appeal has been so helpful. It provides the initial funding needed to allow us to start new projects such as our research with glaucoma patients from Hampshire. Now, as a result of Gift of Sight, we have made a significant contribution to an international effort to identify novel genes for glaucoma. I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and, as always, thank you very much for your invaluable support. It is making a difference!

Best wishes,



Andrew Lotery, Professor of Ophthalmology

## WE'VE RUN, JUMPED AND HAD A BALL



Professor Andrew Lotery

**Professor Andrew Lotery** completed the **Salisbury Fast Twitch Triathlon** on the 6th May 2010. Trying to fit in training before the event was a huge challenge as this involved running, cycling and swimming. All Prof's hard work came together on the day enabling him to complete the course in two hours and seventeen minutes raising a total of **£750**, plus Gift Aid. We enjoy working as a team and taking part in fundraising events to help boost the fantastic support we receive from our donors.

### TANDEM SKYDIVE

Our team of eleven all jumped, or fell, with their instructors on a Tandem Skydive at Old Sarum Airfield, near Salisbury, Wilts. The team included wives of patients, staff from the University and the Eye Unit, students, friends and family. It was encouraging to have support from the latter groups on the day. We had tremendous fun although the first day had to be postponed due to cloud cover after only half the team had jumped. We all eventually had our 'fix' of falling from an aeroplane and raised an overall team sum in excess of **£6,250**. This could become addictive!



Sasha Beechey, her tandem instructor and mascot on the way down!  
(Photo: Skydive Southcoast)



Members of the clinical and secretarial teams from Southampton Eye Unit  
(Photo: P.S. Photography)

Our **BALL** was held on a beautiful sunny evening in June at the Legacy Botleigh Grange Hotel, Hedge End near Southampton. After welcome drinks in the garden we moved indoors for a three course meal, raffles, and an auction followed by very energetic dancing to great music provided by a live band 'Innervision'. Thanks must be extended to the companies and individuals who kindly provided prizes. Special thanks to Draper Tools Ltd and Topcon Ltd for their generous sponsorship. As well as a very enjoyable evening we managed to raise the tremendous sum of **£12,000**.

### With your help we can increase this amount!

Mr Richard Wintle, who was a Doctor at Southampton Eye Unit, moved back to Wales to take up a consultancy and is still hugely supportive of Gift of Sight. He has very kindly offered two tickets for the **Wales v Australia** rugby match at the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff on Saturday 6th November 2010. **Please e-mail or telephone** a bid for the tickets to Ailsa at the Gift of Sight Office. The highest offer as at 5pm on Thursday, 30th September will secure the tickets. **Please help us move closer to our £20,000 team goal.**

**CAR BOOT SALE** On the 6th June 2010 Jackie and Ian Davies, Jacqui Owens, Bill Organ and Ailsa attended the Winchester Cattle Market Car Boot Sale to collect money from attendees which raised **£643**.

## THANK YOU

We would like to thank Greta Paxton and Ian and Bridget Corrie Hill for opening their homes and holding coffee mornings with sales of goods for the third year running. Chichester and Midhurst Lions Clubs, Rotary Club of Romsey Test, Southampton Short Stay Eye Unit, Cosham Lodge, Lodge of St. Denys and the Freemasons New Forest Group have all forwarded further donations. Happy Birthday to Mrs Jean Burgess and thanks for forgoing presents on our behalf. We would also like to express our gratitude for many huge personal and group donations which are helping to push our research forward.

## WORKING WITH US

### WELLCOME NURSES

As part of the treatment at Southampton Eye Unit (SEU) we rely very much for assistance from our Wellcome nurses, Marie Nelson, Catrin Watkins and Trishna Das. When a patient has been diagnosed with new onset 'wet' age related macular degeneration, and are deemed suitable to take part in a clinical trial for treatment, they are introduced to one of these research nurses. The nurse explains the nature of the trial, what treatments are used, why it is running and what the first visit would entail. If the patient shows an interest they are given a detailed information leaflet to take home which allows them time for discussion with their family. If they decide to decline they are moved through the usual NHS channels where their regular treatment will be undertaken and monitored.

Patients who decide to participate in the trial are booked for a thorough screening visit and, once deemed eligible, the treatment can begin. The nurses facilitate the running of the research clinic by greeting patients, carrying out assessments and co-ordinating staff such as optometrists, photographers and doctors so that the patient's visits run as smoothly as possible. The clinical trials last for a period of two years at which time the patient is returned to normal outpatient clinics. Mrs Eileen Bourn, who was recently diagnosed with wet AMD, says :

**'After a routine eye test my optician referred me to the Southampton Eye Unit as it was thought my cataracts should be checked. During the examination the doctor called in Professor Lotery as he detected signs of Age related macular degeneration. His suspicions were confirmed and things moved quickly from then on and within seven days I had joined up to the trial and was receiving my first treatment. The thought of injections in my eye was worse than the deed itself and, whilst not comfortable, they are over fairly quickly. I was under no obligation at all to take part in the trials and am impressed with the time and treatment given to patients in the Eye Unit. My cataracts are still growing but my macular is showing clear improvement as a result of the treatment I have received. My experience has shown the importance of regular eye examinations.'**



Catrin Watkins  
one of our  
team of  
Wellcome  
nurses

## LEGACIES and STANDING ORDERS

Leaving a legacy to Gift of Sight in your will could help ensure the continuation of our research. Obviously your family must come first but even a small legacy gift would help our research to continue.

Many thanks to our Standing Order donors for their regular support.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### DIARY DATES

- 10th October Jackie Davies and Emma Scott-Copeland have signed up to walk 11 miles of the Rotary Test Way Walk. Our JustGiving page is [www.justgiving.com/walk-for-Gift-of-Sight](http://www.justgiving.com/walk-for-Gift-of-Sight) and if you would like to walk for us please let us know. The enclosed insert gives further details.
- 25th September Concert at Portsmouth Anglican Cathedral to raise funds for Gift of Sight and Seafarers UK. 'Petite Messe Solennelle' by Gioachino Rossini. Tickets £10: (Concessions £7.50). Available from the Cathedral Shop or Box Office 07900 098197.
- 24th November Southampton Inner Wheel Christmas Fair, 10.00am-12 noon at Chilworth Village Hall, Chilworth, near Southampton SO16 7JZ. Christmas items and refreshments on sale raising funds for Gift of Sight as the President's Charity.
- 4th December 10.00am—8.00pm Stall in the Winchester Christmas Market in Cathedral Close. More details are given on the enclosed insert and please come and buy some Christmas items on the day.
- 13th December Carol Concert in Winchester College Chapel 6.30pm featuring Dame Emma Kirkby (soprano) Professor Lord Winston and Wendy Cope (poet). £25 per ticket. Entrance by ticket only. We would welcome contact from companies wishing to take advertising space in the programme.

Many thanks to those of you who save milk bottle tops and deliver them to North Baddesley. J Sainsbury in Shirley receive milk bottle tops and can no longer get them to our Recyclers. If you live in Shirley and would be willing to liaise with Mandy Collinson at Sainsburys in order to help them deliver the tops please telephone her on 023 8077 2273. Your help would be gratefully received.

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