

## *Dear friends and supporters*

Results of the first randomised clinical trial of Central Serous Retinopathy, which I led across 22 clinical sites in the United Kingdom, has finished and I recently travelled to Paris to attend a meeting of international experts who are working on a new classification of this disease. Results of the trial will be presented at Euretina, one of the largest retinal meetings in the world, in September and at the American Academy of Ophthalmology in San Francisco in November. I am also leading a new Phase 1 clinical trial of a novel neuroprotective drug for dry Age-related macular degeneration (AMD). This is only the first step in the testing process to make sure it is safe to use but we hope this will lead to new treatments for this condition. We are also testing new drugs for wet AMD which may last longer inside the eye and have commenced screening patients for our new Stargardt's clinical trial. Stargardt's disease is the most common cause of macular degeneration in the young and currently there is no treatment available so we are very excited to have started this study.



I am delighted to welcome Dr Adnan Khan to our team as a new NIHR Clinical Lecturer in Ophthalmology. Adnan has joined us from Aberdeen as we are able to offer a combined research and clinical training programme which is only available in a few institutions around the United Kingdom. Scientists have become increasingly aware that inflammation may cause AMD to get worse and Adnan's research will focus on discovering the reasons for this. He will be working closely with my colleague Professor Jessica Teeling (Experimental Neuroimmunology) and myself. Adnan has previously undertaken research in both London and Oxford and will combine his academic research with completing his higher ophthalmology training.

Two of our PhD students, Savannah Lynn and Ahmed Salman, will graduate from the University of Southampton on the 22 July and I know you will join me in congratulating them both on this significant achievement. Savannah remains in Dr Arjuna Ratnayaka's research group as a postdoctoral scientist, continuing her project relating to the role of the Amyloid Beta protein in eye disease. Ahmed has now left Southampton and is furthering his academic eye research at the University of Oxford.

We are currently organising a 'Gift of Sight Race Day' at Salisbury Racecourse. This is a huge event for us and it would be wonderful if you were able to support us. Our annual Christmas Concert will be held in Romsey Abbey on the 17 December. Booking starts on the 1 October so please be prepared and remember to put the date in your diary. I know our website is always kept updated with details for all our events.

Thank you again, in advance, for your tremendous support for our work. We really do appreciate all that you do for us.



Andrew Lotery MD, FRCOphth  
Professor of Ophthalmology

# Research News

Research supported by Gift of Sight is undertaken in the University of Southampton.

## Mr Parwez Hossain : Corneal research

Since contributing to the Newsletter in January 2018 we have been successful in moving forward with our research testing methods for corneal infections. The result of our initial survey shows that the new microchip we have developed can detect an infective episode in a matter of few minutes in patients presenting in clinic. What is clear at this stage is that the technology greatly shortens the time taken to detect infection. In laboratory controlled conditions we are able to distinguish between larger organisms such as Acanthamoeba from bacteria. Patient recruitment continues and, with each sample we receive, we are gaining a greater understanding of the capability of the device. Timely diagnosis is critical to save loss of sight from infections and this approach is also generating interest from colleagues studying other infections in the body where a similar problem exists e.g. meningitis.



Another of our research interests is a condition called Keratoconus, a progressive eye disease where the normally round cornea gets thinner and begins to bulge into a cone-like shape. This cone shape distorts light as it enters the eye on its way to the light-sensitive retina, causing blurred vision. Keratoconus can occur in one or both eyes and often begins during a person's teens or early 20s. Current treatments for this condition usually start with lens changes in glasses and contact lenses. However, neither of these approaches can treat the underlying process. Collagen cross-linking therapy is available but it can only be used to stabilise the shape of the cornea. Many patients with poor vision only have one option, which is to undergo a corneal transplant. In the UK the sight of over 4,500 people was restored through transplants last year but there is a worrying shortage of donors.

In order to try to help this situation my colleague Mr Aris Konstantopoulos assisted me recently in performing a new laser corneal transplant technique for the first time on a local patient. Known as the Femto LDVZ8, the technique is so precise it can split donor corneal tissue in two, potentially allowing the different layers of corneal tissue to be transplanted into two separate patients. This procedure would mean that a single cornea could benefit two people. The laser, which was on loan from Switzerland, uses low energy which means there is less chance of damage to the surrounding parts of the eye and, as no blades are required for surgery, it allows better wound reconstruction and recovery. Southampton Hospital is able to retrieve corneas for transplant but, as mentioned, there is a serious shortage of tissue available.

On behalf of my patients I would encourage you to please sign up to National Organ Donor Scheme to help people who suffer from conditions that can only be remedied by a corneal transplant.

## GIFTS IN WILLS

Gift of Sight legacy bequests have transformed the amount of work we have been able to support during the last year. These are such personal gifts and each legacy reminds us of strong relationships forged with friends and supporters who have empathy with our cause. These may be patients who have received treatments which have enabled them to retain vision and independence or those who have a personal family experience of sight loss. Thank you to those of you who have told us of your legacy intentions which means we can thank you for your kindness in advance.

We would also like to thank the many people who have donated funds to Gift of Sight in memory of their friends and family at the time of their death. We hugely appreciate this thought, made at a time of great sadness when there is already so much to organise. Each pound raised helps take us closer to finding better treatments for the very many of us who are threatened by the loss of sight.

# Thank You

## Team Lotery ABP Half Marathon 5 May 2019

Professor Andrew Lotery, his wife Helen and son Chris enjoyed their run. The weather was good and they all completed the course with no injuries. Grateful thanks from the team for all sponsorship which raised £1,175.50. This sum will help our University of Southampton vision science team continue with studies into the causes of age-related macular degeneration and related retinal diseases.

## Evening Garden Party 6 June 2019

Friends and supporters enjoyed a fabulous evening in Patricia Elkington's beautiful garden in Crawley, near Winchester. Our photo shows Patricia with the Gift of Sight team before our guests arrived. Professor Andrew Lotery and Dr Jorn Lakowski, our Elkington Research Fellow, were with us to enjoy canapes and a glass of prosecco. We enjoyed a very leisurely time in peaceful surroundings, catching up with old friends and making new ones! Our heartfelt thanks go to Patricia for raising the sum of £1,536 through ticket sales, donations and the sale of plants on the evening. It's always a pleasure to grow something new and to 'take home' a little bit of someone else's garden!



## Susan Symes Button Exhibition May 28—31 May 2019

Susan collected antique buttons for over thirty years. She curated exhibitions of some of these buttons in her home and many people visited to view this wonderful collection. All visitors were warmly welcomed and the donations pot for Gift of Sight was always well in view. At her last exhibition in May, Susan had a lovely week, seeing many friends and meeting new visitors, helped by her daughter Jan. As well as button exhibitions Susan gave talks about her hobby, entitled 'Art in Miniature', donating the speaker's fee to support our research. Susan raised an amazing £13,750 for Gift of Sight over the years, always taking a great interest in the staff coming and going through the laboratories. On Friday afternoon, 31 May, Ailsa was delighted to present Susan with a climbing rose to plant in her beautiful garden and thanked her for all her hard work supporting our scientists.



Sadly, Susan passed away suddenly shortly afterwards and her family reflected on what a perfect time she had enjoyed catching up with friends and acquaintances, many of whom she had not seen for some while. If you knew Susan and would like to make a donation to Gift of Sight in her memory please send a cheque to this office, telephone 023 8059 7239 for card payments or contribute through the 'donate' button on our website. Susan has donated her corneas which will hopefully help someone else to retain their vision. A perfect gift from this wonderful lady who will be remembered fondly by all who knew her.

## Kilimanjaro Trek—March 2019

Grateful thanks to ALL the team who undertook this challenging trek to support research into acute bilateral cataracts in children. Freddie Richards was diagnosed with cataracts when he was two years old but, following surgery by Mr Jay Self in Southampton Eye Unit, he has been able to retain his sight and can read, play games and enjoy life to the full! More donations have been received since the presentation of this cheque and the final total is an amazing **£22,152**.



## ***Forthcoming events/Dates for your diary***

2019 03 Sept.	<p><b>Gift of Sight Race Day at Salisbury Racecourse Tuesday 3 September 2019</b></p> <p>We are holding a Race Day and there are several ways you can be involved. Generous companies have sponsored races and we have a hospitality suite with a panoramic view of the racecourse. Tickets, including entry to the racecourse, a three course meal and a voluntary donation of £25 to Gift of Sight, cost £145pp with a table of ten at £1400. Please phone us on 02380597239 to buy tickets. Public entry to Salisbury Racecourse can be booked through <a href="http://www.salisburyracecourse.co.uk/">www.salisburyracecourse.co.uk/</a> and you will be able to support us by buying tickets for our raffle.</p> <div data-bbox="225 506 884 712" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"><p>Raffle Prize donations will be greatly appreciated. If you know someone that might help with a corporate donation please call Yvonne Richmond on 02380 594460.</p></div> <p style="text-align: right; color: red;">Thanks to Meachers Global Logistics Sponsors of the Gift of Sight Maiden Stakes</p> 
17 Dec.	<p><b>Carol Concert Tuesday 17 December in Romsey Abbey</b></p> <p>Our annual Concert is being organised with tickets priced at £40, £35 (reserved front and back of nave) and £30 unreserved side aisle with excellent acoustics &amp; TV screen. The cost includes a glass of wine and a mince pie which will be served in Romsey Abbey. Kate Adie, CBE, DL will be speaking. She was Chief News Correspondent for BBC News between 1989 and 2003, during which time she reported from war zones around the world. Booking for the Concert commences on the 1 October through Music in Romsey <a href="http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/musicinromsey">www.ticketsource.co.uk/musicinromsey</a>, by telephone 01794 512987 or by cheque payable to 'Tourism South East' and sent to TSE, 13 Church St, Romsey SO51 8BT. Please give your address and telephone number when booking in case they need to make contact.</p>
Dec. 2019	<p><b>Mike Larcombe's Te Araroa trek : commencing end of December 2019</b></p> <p>The route Mike is following is the Te Araroa pathway, taking in both the north and south islands of New Zealand on foot and sometimes in a kayak, to raise funding for two charities close to his heart: Gift of Sight's Paediatric fund and Nystagmus Network. This is a massive trek and further details will be shared in our next Newsletter. Please support Mike on his Justgiving page : <a href="http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/walk-for-wiggly-eyes-gift-of-sight">www.justgiving.com/fundraising/walk-for-wiggly-eyes-gift-of-sight</a></p>

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