

Macular Degeneration successfully treated in Stem Cell Ophthalmology Treatment Study

Legally blind patient achieves major improvement in vision after stem cell treatment in SCOTS

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA, USQ, February 16, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Doug Oliver had never seen his wife clearly because of a form of macular degeneration called Autosomal Dominant Drusen which had started to damage his vision when he was only 30 years old. Now in his early 50's, it had robbed him of his ability to drive and live independently as well as his ability to see peoples' faces.

As Oliver's wife Ann related, "It broke my heart that he was not able to see his own grandchildren. You're trying to watch them grow up and he was able to see less and less."

When examined at the University of Vanderbilt in 2014, his vision had deteriorated to 20/400 in the right eye and 20/2000 in the left. The macula or central part of his retina showed extensive changes from the abnormal drusen – a yellow –white material that was relentlessly being deposited in his retina.

Dr. Jeffrey Weiss, Principal Investigator for the Stem Cell Ophthalmology Treatment Study or [SCOTS](#), explains: "The retina lies on the back of the eye and contains the photoreceptors that sense light, sending signals through the optic nerve to the brain for vision. When there are drusen deposits under these special cells in the layer known as the RPE or Retinal Pigment Epithelium, the photoreceptors don't receive proper support, don't function normally and eventually die. The central vision deteriorates as a result."

The Stem Cell Ophthalmology Treatment Study or SCOTS is a clinical study being conducted in Florida. The study uses the patient's own stem cells obtained under anesthesia from the bone marrow. These are injected around and potentially in the eye depending on the disease and degree of visual loss. Both retina and optic nerve conditions are being treated. So far over 250 patients with a number of different eye diseases have participated.

After having his eye exam evaluated and being enrolled in SCOTS, Doug Oliver underwent stem cell injections in his right eye and surgical placement of the stem cells beneath the retina of his worse left eye. On an early follow up visit at the Vanderbilt Eye Institute, there was a remarkable improvement in vision to the 20/50 range in the right eye and 20/40 range in the left eye.



Retinal Changes in Macular Degeneration



Dr. Steven Levy

“A month after surgery I was seeing about 20/40 in both eyes. I could count the leaves on trees, see the crisp sparkle of light reflecting from cars in a parking lot, read road signs and see faces”, according to Oliver. “My results have been verified by my own retinal specialist. I’m now a believer!” The remarkable changes were reported on [ABC Television](#).

Along with improvements in central vision, there was clearing of the Amsler grid that he routinely checked for distortion and significant improvements in peripheral vision. His retinal ophthalmologist at the Vanderbilt Eye Institute has noted thickening of the retina on OCT in his most recent visit.

SCOTS is a patient funded clinical trial and costs are involved which insurance does not cover because the procedure is investigational. Doug Oliver was able to raise the required amount through a very successful [GoFundMe](#) campaign which included contributions from people in his local area. He eventually held a party for all the donors to celebrate his improvement in vision.

Dr. Steven Levy, Study Director of SCOTS, discusses: “While patients do not have to be legally blind to

enroll in SCOTS, Mr. Oliver was well into that category with pre-treatment vision of 20/400 and 20/2000 or Counting Fingers. To observe an extremely rapid increase in visual acuity within the first month following treatment in SCOTS was notable. Now at 6 months following SCOTS, Mr. Oliver has sent us a report showing he has improved further to the 20/30 and 20/40 visual acuity range which is legal for driving. This large and rapid visual improvement in a macular degeneration patient is very encouraging.”

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Conditions eligible for treatment include retinal diseases such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD), myopic macular degeneration, hereditary retinopathies such as Retinitis Pigmentosa, Cone Dystrophy, Stargardts, as well as selected inflammatory, vascular and traumatic conditions. Optic nerve diseases considered eligible include glaucoma, ischemic optic

neuropathy, optic atrophy, optic neuritis, hereditary optic neuropathies, Lebers , NMO or Devic’s syndrome and some trauma.

SCOTS is registered with the National Institutes of Health and the approach is listed on the website www.clinicaltrials.gov with identifier NCT01920867. The Principal Investigator who performs the procedure is Dr. Jeffrey Weiss, an experienced retina surgeon and ophthalmologist in Margate, Florida.

MD Stem Cells is a trusted and valued source of the latest information regarding clinically available adult stem cell treatments for patients. MD Stem Cells is Collaborator and Dr. Levy is Study Director for the SCOTS Stem Cell Ophthalmology Treatment Study. Patients interested in treatment may contact MD Stem Cells by email, by phone 203-423-9494 or by visiting the website www.mdstemcells.com and using the Contact Us page. Please follow us on Twitter



Dr. Jeffrey Weiss performing the SCOTS Procedure

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